



A Familiar Trait of the North American Grain Farmer

FARMERS have, by the very nature of their chosen profession, a dedication to the stewardship of our soil, water and natural resources. Today, the modern grain farmer is using this sense of stewardship and has made many changes in the way soils are managed and crops are grown, with the thought of environmental protection in mind. These grain producers are well aware of their environmental responsibilities. Since the "environmental age" began, the possible negative effects of agriculture on the environment have been brought to their attention. Now, many farmers are concerned that burdensome government policies may be formulated to improve perceived non-point pollution problems which they are already bringing under control. Without minimizing the severity of environmental problems in certain critical areas, we must not overlook changes that are taking place.

Jeff Hopkins at The Ohio State University recently completed a Master's thesis concluding that modern technology on typical Ohio grain farms requires little or no tradeoff among the environment, productivi-

ty and profit. The thesis points out that it is possible at once to maintain a safe environment, plentiful food supplies and farm profits. Credit for this revolution goes to agribusiness for developing such things as no-till drills, more precise fertilizer applicators, improved products and practices that control weeds and insects using ounces rather than pounds of ingredients, and better crop varieties that get more crop output per pound of plant nutrients. Credit also goes to science and education at our universities and USDA who share in the development and use of these new technologies.

Major credit goes to the innovative and progressive farmers who bring all these improved inputs and practices together on the farm. They have used these traits in the past to answer the call for more productivity per crop acre in order to meet the food demands of a growing world population. They have utilized this same initiative to overcome hardships brought on by droughts, floods and market instabilities.

Today, U.S. and Canadian farmers are answering the environmental call by implementing new technologies, changing soil management practices, and improving crop production efficiencies. Together these changes are having a dramatic and positive impact on solving environmental problems associated with crop production. The following series of articles highlights some of these changes and the impact they are having on such environmentally related issues as soil erosion, carbon sequestering, organic matter build-up, fertilizer use efficiency, and greenhouse gas production as it relates to global warming. **BC**

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