



THE WILSON FAMILY SANILAC COUNTY, MI



MICHIGAN SOYBEAN FARMERS PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

In a cozy office tucked at the end of a narrow homestead hallway, Michigan soybean farmer Jim Wilson talks about the history of his family farm, from the desk where he and his brother charted a path for its future.

“Our great-grandfather came here with a team of horses, a flat-rack wagon and their children,” Wilson says. “The story is that there was a log cabin on this site with no windows, and they had to travel 15 miles for any supplies.”

From that humble beginning rose an operation built on partnership between family members to meet specific, sustainable goals.

“That legacy is important to us, and this office is where so much time has been spent in the planning that has led to the sustainability of our operation,” Wilson continues. “From planning what fields should have what, reviewing soil tests, determining seed varieties ... proactive, but careful decisions have put us where we are.”

Scenarios similar to Wilson's are playing out all over Michigan as the state's soybean growers, encouraged by environmental responsibilities, the long-term viability of their businesses, and government programs, are making operational improvements dedicated to positively and proactively impacting the sustainability of their operations. In fact, according to a recent survey:

70%

Nearly 70 percent of Michigan soybean farmers attend at least two educational meetings every winter to keep current on soybean management as well as innovative technologies and best practices.



More than 45 percent use variable-rate technology for seed, fertilizer and pesticide applications. Usage of this technology decreases fuel usage and emissions, while ensuring each acre gets only the application amount it needs to achieve the desired goal.

80%

More than 80 percent conduct on-farm field research. By evaluating new products in a scientific, replicated design, Michigan's soybean farmers shield local soil, air and water from the impact of ineffective large-scale usage of products that don't perform as advertised on their acreage.



PLANNING

Seventy percent of Michigan soybean farmers create and reference a field management plan for soybean production. Pairing past measures and performance with strategic decision making increases the likelihood of more efficiently using unused field-retained nutrients from the year before, which results in increased conservation of local land, air and water.



Ninety-one percent use the same amount of fuel or less per acre than they did five years ago. Farm machinery hasn't gotten any smaller in the past five years, but operational fuel efficiency has improved, meaning less use of a nonrenewable resource, decreased emissions and less probability of fuel spills.



"It's extremely important that we pass on not only an operation in good standing, but also that legacy of sustainability so it doesn't get put on the back burner. I firmly believe we need to be proactive and put these practices at the forefront."