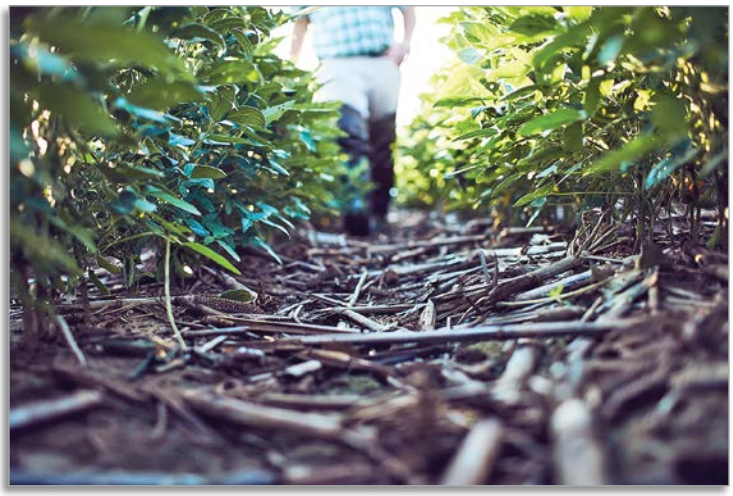
Straight Rows
KANSAS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION
Volume 23, Issue 2 | Winter 2018

Sustainability is building upon a strong foundation

At first glance, sustainability presents itself as a big concept that is difficult to grasp or define. On closer inspection, *sustainability* is the name for what always has been the case in agriculture: farmers caring for the resources that contribute to a thriving and profitable crop. And it only continues to get better.

Farmers know more today than they knew 50 years ago. They have better tools to make essential farm functions quicker, easier and more efficient. Those innovations and discoveries have changed the way they approach farming.



From 2000 to 2017, the percentage of the total area planted in Kansas that is no-till or minimum-till has increased by 36 percent. {United Soybean Board photo}

Farmers always have the goal of creating a better tomorrow for their families and their land. The increased buzz around sustainable farming helps create that future using the knowledge available today. For that reason, most farmers already are using sustainable practices and likely would call themselves sustainable.

Over the past several decades, big changes have been made in Kansas, according to the 2017 Soy Sustainability Performance Database.

- **Nutrient efficiency.** From 2000 to 2015, yields per acre increased 93 percent, but potash application per acre decreased by 44 percent and phosphate application per acre decreased by 33 percent.
- **Reduced tillage.** From 2000 to 2017, the percentage of the total area planted that is no-till or minimum-till has increased by 36 percent.
- **Improved water quality.** In 2005, there were almost 11,000 acres that included a grassed waterway. By 2016, that had increased to almost 37,000 acres.

Many farmers are doing their part to care for the land, air and soil, but there still is an emphasis on continuous improvement driven by end users, the companies that are buying raw goods for their products. That might seem like an extra burden, but implementing those practices can be beneficial because of the demand for sustainable goods in the marketplace.

End users are looking to achieve big environmental goals like reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, increasing energy-use efficiency and increasing soil conservation. They want to buy sustainable, renewable and ethically raised goods that help them accomplish those goals. By implementing sustainable practices, farmers are producing what customers are seeking, ultimately driving up demand and increasing the market for U.S. soy.

Sustainable goods also are in high demand in international mar-

continued on page 9

Expo '19 will include interstate, international issues

Kansas soybean farmers and their industry partners will gather Jan. 9, 2019, in Topeka for the Kansas Soybean Expo. The Kansas Soybean Association (KSA) organizes the annual event, with checkoff funding from the Kansas Soybean Commission (KSC), to coincide with the Topeka Farm Show.

The free event returns to the Capitol Plaza Hotel's Maner Conference Center at the Kansas Expocentre. Registration and exhibits open at 8:30 a.m., with the program scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. A reception with KSA and KSC leaders will follow.

The welcome will come from KSA President Lucas Heinen, Everest, and KSC Chairman Kurt Maurath, Oakley.

The opening session will offer checkoff-partner updates. The first will be "The McClellan–Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System: What It Means to Kansas" from Thaddaeus Babb, waterways program manager for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. Next will be Ed Anderson, Ph.D., executive director of the North Central Soybean Research Program, with a presentation titled "Leading the Research Effort."

Promising a unique keynote address, Bob Farmer entertains, educates and motivates all types of audiences across the country. He has been called a good mix of Jerry Clower and Garrison Keillor. He is a member of the International Society of Storytellers, and Zig Ziglar sponsored his joining the prestigious National Speakers Association more than 20 years ago.

continued on page 4

Fostering a long-term connection with the land

Justin Knopf, a fifth-generation farmer from Saline County, is working to tell his land's sustainability story. Knopf Farms Inc. manages 4,200 acres of soybeans, alfalfa, corn, grain sorghum and wheat.

A Kansas State University (K-State) graduate, Knopf served as an agronomist until he felt pulled back to the family farm. His passion for a long-term connection with the land and the day-to-day challenge of farming is evident.

"Farming is really meaningful work," Knopf shared. "A farmer captures energy from the sun through photosynthesis, using natural resources, such as soil, water and air, and transforms that energy into something we can utilize as human beings."

He is focused on the big picture and the future of farming. He is committed to imparting long-term perspective to future generations.

"We are all a small piece of a broader story that is playing out over time," Knopf noted. "To me, sustainability means staying power."

He seeks to ensure the land is in good condition to produce and is economically viable for the foreseeable future. To him, the key components of sustainability reach across economic, environmental and social aspects.

Transitioning to continuous no-till created significant benefits for Knopf Farms. It has led to reduced soil erosion, increased carbon capture and content in the soils, increased soil biological activity, and less energy use. Because the soil–plant relationship is a biological system, those changes led to increased resiliency over time. No-till also has led to additional management decisions like a diverse crop rotation and strategic incorporation of cover crops.



Justin Knopf (inset), Gypsum, is committed to imparting a long-term perspective to future generations. {Field to Market photos}

Knopf Farms collects agronomic and economic data for K-State research projects and farm-management decisions. Knopf finds value in the information collected with the Fieldprint® Platform and uses the analysis to fine-tune his management choices and monitor key metrics, such as soil carbon.

"The Fieldprint Platform takes a snapshot across time of improvements across the land," he explained.

Participating in Field to Market's Supply Chain Sustainability Program allows farmers to gather information that helps tell their stories to a public more removed generationally from the farm. The Fieldprint project gives farmers and brands opportunities to build and maintain consumer trust as they communicate and create transparency about farming practices. Knopf encourages other farmers to be open-minded about participating as more pressure builds on their resources.

"Start with a single field and study the metrics produced to find where there might be value to your operation and decision-making going forward," he advised.

The Knopf family's conservation efforts were featured in a recent book, *Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman: Conservation Heroes of the American Heartland*, by Miriam Horn. Knopf also participated in a documentary of the same title. The farm regularly hosts various groups, including international delegations, student groups, researchers and environmental groups.

Help for farmers to increase efficiency, share their stories

The topic of sustainability is vital to Kansas farms for two important reasons. First, it's a platform that enables farmers to share their stories of conservation and stewardship with consumers. Second, it provides a lens to help ensure their practices will sustain their farms for generations to come.

The Fieldprint® Calculator is an important tool for helping identify farmers' efficiencies, continuing positive results for the environment and their bottom lines. That is a practice from which all farmers can benefit, and such an analysis can help advance sustainable outcomes, like limiting carbon footprints and improving irrigation efficiency.

Pursuing a journey of continuous improvement is about both the current bottom line and sustaining land values for future generations.

Learn more at *http://FieldToMarket.org* on the web.

Sustainability is

continued from page 1

kets. Many global markets prefer to import sustainable soy. Because farmers continue to implement sustainable practices on their farms, the soy grown today meets those global markets' qualifications, creating demand for U.S. soy around the world.

When it seems like discussions of sustainability are coming from every direction, it can be overwhelming. It is important for farmers to take a step back, identify what they already are doing to be sustainable and determine areas where improvement is possible. Building on the strong foundation of caring for farm resources can make a big difference to the environment and to farm profitability.

