

Chesapeake Bay Watershed of Delaware

FARM #1

Jay Baxter is a fourth-generation farmer at Baxter Farms in Georgetown, Delaware, where he grows corn, soybeans, sweetcorn, lima beans and small greens along with chickens and flowers.

Jay began adopting cover crop practices in the early 2000s and now also practices no-till, conservation till and planting green.

“The way we were doing things was not necessarily working as well as I’d wanted it to. The tillage practices that we had at the time, we were not seeing a return on the investment that I thought we should have seen,” he said. “Help is harder to come by, equipment is more and more expensive to buy, invest in, and use and to maintain, and we started looking into other options. No-till seemed to kind of fit that bill.”

In his region of Delaware, in the coastal plain, Jay has few issues with erosion, but sometimes experienced wind erosion before implementing soil health practices.

“We’ve seen some interesting changes in our soil as we’ve been adopting these practices,” he said. “We’ve been steadfast in moving forward with these practices, and we are seeing visual changes, we are seeing economic changes, we are seeing improvements.”

Baxter describes challenges with weather and manpower, but welcomes experimentation to find what’s best for his operation. “With any change, there’s always a challenge; we decided that we were going to be extremely stubborn and overcome them,” he said. “Now, it’s nice to say that some of my neighbors have adopted some of these practices. I don’t mind being a guinea pig sometimes if it means we can prove something is right or wrong.”

“We have had to overcome things, like updating some equipment that needed to be to be able to work with no-till conditions or with large cover crop conditions,” Jay said. “Our biggest hurdle to date is trying to get all cover crop in, in the amount of time we have when the weather is still good without spending a fortune to get it done.” Jay often partners with Sussex Conservation District to utilize specialized equipment like a cover crop air seeder or airplane for aerial seeding.



View Jay’s interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNEaqo6ihzs>

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