

Lower Pee Dee Watershed of South Carolina

FARM #18

Rupert Burrows is a third-generation farmer from Kingstree, South Carolina. His grandfather started their farm with his brothers and sisters, growing tobacco and vegetables. Today, Rupert farms with his uncle and grows corn and soybeans on 65 acres.

While Rupert has experimented with several different soil health practices, he has had the most success with cover crops. “I try to plant a cover crop on everything because a living root makes a difference in your soil health,” Rupert said. He uses other soil health practices on a case-by-case basis every year, depending on the crop and field conditions. Typically, he utilizes no-till on his fields 4 out of every 5 years, but he has struggled committing fully to no-till due to his equipment and the characteristics of his operation.

Rupert said he started experimenting with conservation practices to see if there was an economic benefit. “And what I found is that, once you get soil healthy and viable, you don’t need to apply as many pesticides and fertilizers,” he said. Rupert has seen more than just economic benefits from conservation practices. “I’ve seen better water infiltration and reduced my use of insecticides,” he said. Rupert has also seen more biological diversity and activity in his soil.

Looking forward to the future, Rupert hopes to get the soil in balance and minimize his use of chemical and fertilizer inputs. He plans to continue cover cropping and testing new approaches to better understand the effects of these practices. Beyond that, he likes to maintain an open mind and ear when deciding what comes next.

Rupert thinks everyone should try implementing conservation practices on their farm. “I see the long-term benefits, I see the need for growth,” he said. “We only have so much land and we need to do our best to take care of it and preserve it, not just for us but for future generations as well. We’ve got to figure out how we’re going to feed and sustain this ever-growing population while preserving the planet.”



He believes that, even if producers aren’t sold on conservation practices yet, they should try it on a small portion of their operation. “Work with other growers who have implemented these practices to get a feel for it and for guidance, and you will definitely see benefits from it,” Rupert said.

View Rupert’s interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEb2bZbvfkQ>

“We only have so much land and we need to do our best to take care of it and preserve it, not just for us but for future generations as well.”

Lower Pee Dee Watershed of South Carolina

