

China Creek-Red River Watershed of Texas

FARM #23

Kenneth McAlister (left) farms on 14,800 acres with his wife, Diane, in Electra, Texas. He grew up farming with his father and grandfathers, but began on his own in 1986 after he and Diane got married. Their farm mainly consists of cotton and winter wheat; however, some acreage is devoted to grain sorghum, canola, corn and sesame.

Kenneth started experimenting with no-till in 2003 and converted the entire operation to the practice in 2005. He began planting cover crops in 2013 and has been increasing his acreage each year.

One of the big benefits of his no-till operation is that he gets to spend more time with his family. "I'll never forget farming with the chisel plow. You worked your butt off all year round, and you could come home to do paperwork last. Now, it seems like we work for a week spraying and then spend another week working on paperwork. The benefits there is that I get to spend a lot more time with my family," Kenneth said.

Around 2005, his family tripled the acreage in his operation. This was a big undertaking, but, with no-till, he didn't need to spend nearly as much money to manage the new land as he would have in a conventional operation. With conventional tillage, Kenneth said he would have needed four big tractors and four plows, with four individuals driving, and likely wouldn't have been able to cover 1,000 acres in one day. With no-till, he can take his sprayer and do more than 1,000 acres, on his own, in a day. "We saved a big chunk of money on labor. Not only did we save money on labor, we saved quite a bit of money on fuel, because it takes a lot of money just to run those tractors," he said.

Kenneth says the benefits to erosion have been tremendous. "With the no-till farming, we've got the roots and the organic material standing out there, so when the water hits the standing plant or the residue, it's not nearly as apt to bounce as it is against that soil," he said.

"There's costs and challenges involved, but it's well worth every moment of it," Kenneth said.



View Kenneth's interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yyoSZHJMN8>

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