

Tippecanoe Watershed of Indiana

FARM #25

David Ransbottom farms soybeans, corn and wheat on about 3,500 acres in Claypool, Indiana. He runs his operation with his father, brother and oldest son. The family operation began with his father in 1971; however, the family has recently expanded it to its current size.

“We started no-tilling soybeans in the early ‘90s and did that for several years,” David said. “Then, we started to no-till corn, and from then on, we’ve just continued no-tilling corn and soybeans. 2007 is when we started using cover crops, and we’ve used cover crops on our acres ever since.”

The topography of their area and its associated challenges is what drove the family to begin conservation farming. “We have a lot of hills, and we were having a lot of erosion with the way we’d been farming, so we decided that we needed to look at doing something different,” David said.

David practices ‘planting green,’ meaning he doesn’t terminate his cover crop before planting. Instead, he lets the covers grow as long as they can, plants into them, and then terminates the covers. Learning how to use this practice was challenging and took a lot of patience, he says, but is well worth it.

“We’re seeing so much more resilience in our soil,” David said. “Our neighbors are always saying that you have to work the ground to be able to get things planted sooner. Well, we’re finding the opposite. If it’s a wet year, the cover crops are taking the excess moisture out, and it’s allowing us to be in there sooner than they are when they’re trying to work it and dry it out to be able to plant it. It’s a long-term system. You have to stay with it.”

After talking with his agronomist, David feels confident that his practices are helping him cut back on his fertilizer applications, among other benefits. “We are using some less nutrients than his other customers are. We don’t have the expense of all the tillage equipment and the extra man-power to make all those extra trips, either,” he said.



According to David, the hardest thing they had to learn was patience to wait for the right field conditions to do no-till planting and terminate the cover crop. “It’s definitely worth the effort,” he says. “You have to do it several years and put the whole system in place to get the full benefits, because it is a long-term investment, in my mind.”

View David’s interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACZD8FIJPa8>

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