

CASE STUDY



USING TECHNOLOGY TO TAKE CARE OF THE LAND AT LAKE ERIE



RCR Partnership

TYPE	Row Crops
LOCATION	Genoa, OH
CROPS	Corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, straw, barley, cover crops
SIZE	2,500 acres
EMPLOYEES	6+

"You can't make a decision based on theory or what might be; the harder evidence you have, the better your decision-making ability is."

Chad Gargas
Genoa, OH

CHALLENGE

Ryan, Richard and Chad Gargas were looking at adopting new technology to improve their business practices without having to use a range of different programs for different parts of the business.

SOLUTION

The Gargas family decided to adopt Agworld, so they could collaborate with Luckey Farmers Inc on the same platform and start using data to drive their decision-making process.

RESULTS

Through increased visibility of Luckey's recommendations on what has been applied to each field already and what worked well historically, the Gargas family is able to work more efficiently as a team and have been able to take the guesswork out of much of their operation. The increased visibility also allows them to be better stewards of their land.



A long history of using technology

Ryan and Chad Gargas are fifth generation farmers in Ohio who, together with their father Richard, farm 2,500 acres of highly fertile land close to Lake Erie. Their great-great-grandfather started to farm in 1892 and, with a team of horses, began a threshing operation in 1910. The farming operation has evolved over the years and the Gargas family is very aware of the role that technology has played throughout the different generations. Chad: “Technology is the only way we’re still in business. If we were still doing things with the horse and buggy, we would basically self-decide to be out of business. For me right now, this continuous improvement of efficiency is my biggest focus: how can we make things better with what we already have.”

It was with this in mind that the Gargas family decided to buy their own self-propelled sprayer two years ago, so they have better control over their operation. However, they also realized that, with this extra workload, they would have an increased need for visibility of their outstanding jobs. Andrew Gladden, IT Director with local co-op Luckey Farmers Inc, recognized this need



and introduced Agworld to the Gargases: “As a co-op we use Agworld in most facets of our business, from agronomy to sampling, logistics, scheduling and record keeping; I feel that members like the Gargas family can hugely benefit by collaborating with us on the same platform. When Ryan told me that they bought a sprayer, I knew right away that, especially during the busy part of the year like springtime, they would have an increased need for visibility into their task load.”

Chad agrees with this and explains: “In spring we’re all in the field doing something, I plant the corn, dad plants the beans and Ryan works the ground and takes care of the spraying. With Agworld, we can all see what everyone is doing. We have our orders lined up from our agronomist and know what is

getting planted where and at what rate.” Although the Gargas family grows a range of crops from corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, straw, barley and cover crops – it is still the traditional row-crop spring planting season when the pressure is on the most. Richard: “We do hire some seasonal guys in spring to help us out but still, communication is key to ensure we get everything done in time; Agworld is now the main tool that we communicate on as a farm, it has cut out a lot of back and forth with each other and our agronomist.”

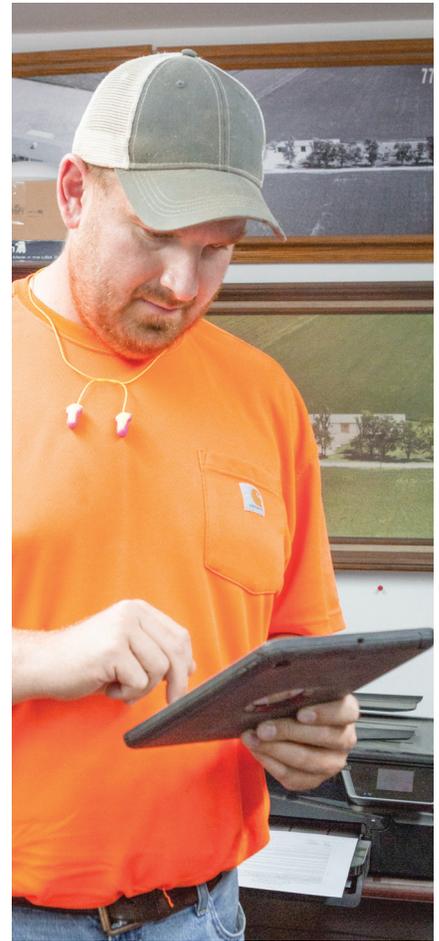
Environment

The Gargases family farm is located close to Lake Erie, which brings some challenges with it as environmental management laws are getting stricter every year. Lake Erie, the smallest of the great lakes, has dealt with health concerns for decades, with algae blooms and eutrophication generating headlines and forcing local growers to be proactive. Chad explains: “We are now planting every acre to cover crop when we don’t have a cash crop planted. This is to keep Lake Erie clean by preventing runoff of nitrogen and phosphates, and wind erosion, but at the same time it also helps us improve carbon-content in our soil, which increases water holding capacity and therefore our yields. So, there are more benefits to it than just Lake Erie, but we’re trying to be proactive because we prefer to be able to do it our way than to wait and then get told exactly what to do. We plant a mixture of rye, radish, peas, oats and hay as part of our crop rotation and I think it works well.”

Chad does more than just being proactive on his own farm however, and also leads the change in his county by being part of the FSA committee. He adds to this: “the way I see it, we’re just the caretakers of the land for the time being and in another 20 or 30 years, hopefully, our kids will be too. My mentality is one of trying new stuff. Just bring it to me and I’ll be the guinea pig. I really want us to be part of the change for the better and Agworld helps us achieve this. Agworld is the in-our-face kind of record keeping which lets us know what needs to get done, but in retrospect also shows us what worked and what didn’t. So, we can now go back and see how did we do that last year? And the year before? In my opinion, this knowledge will help us improve our farming results but also our stewardship of our soil and Lake Erie.”

Adopting Agworld as a team

When deciding to adopt new technology, the introduction phase is naturally an important factor to consider. The Gargases were fortunate that their local co-op was able to help them implement Agworld and guide them with best practices. Chad: “To learn how Agworld works, we sat in here one day with the iPads and learned it all together. Andrew (Gladden, Luckey Farmers) gave us demonstrations and a walk through which gave us all the basics. Then when we actually started using it, we had to call support every now and then, who would help us figure out what we didn’t know, and everything went smoothly as far as I’m concerned. At least we never threw the iPad on the field and ran it over, ha! I’m not the most computer savvy but when I first tried out an iPad using the Agworld application I found that they were easy to use. I’ve got to say: Agworld is really intuitive.”



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When talking about their farming operation, Chad is pretty clear who's part of the team: "We obviously farm as a family and form a team, but as far as I'm concerned, the team is a lot bigger than just dad, Ryan and I. Our co-op, staff and also our bank and landlords are all part of the team. By having all of our critical information in Agworld, we have a lot more to show to our landlords who often don't live on their land anymore, and can make sure that both parties get a fair deal every year."

Chad adds: "Same goes for our bank or insurance agent: whatever they need to help us get what we want, we have the data right here [points to iPad] in Agworld and we can provide it to them on a moment's notice. This doesn't just help them, but in the end, it really helps us. I feel that having immediate access to our data enables us to get better operational deals as the banks and insurance agencies are better able to judge our operation and the potential risks they might run. At the end of the day: a deal is only a good deal when both parties feel as such and that's what we're all about; farming with a long-term view and making sure that all of our partners and us feel like we're getting just that. Agworld helps us put metrics to what this 'good deal' looks like, and I believe that data-accessibility will be very important in the future for everyone in agriculture."



IMPROVING PROFITABILITY IN AGRICULTURE

WHAT AGWORLD OFFERS YOU

- Collect data at every level in a structured way.
- Easily share data with anyone important to your organisation.
- Un-paralleled insights into your operation.
- Empowers you to make more profitable decisions.

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