Visualizing Data to Improve Results

**Challenge**

Alturas Ranches used to use field averages for their seasonal reports. Increasingly however, they realized the limited scope of the dataset available to them meant they were not able to use the data to influence their decision-making processes.

**Solution**

The need for an accurate and more detailed dataset drove Alturas Ranches to adopt Agworld in 2014. They decided to equip the farm directors and all supervisors with Agworld.

**Result**

By having their data visually presented in Agworld, it has sparked inquisitiveness and discussion in the whole Alturas Ranches crew, and they have been able to let this help them improve their farming practices and the results derived from it. Due to improved accuracy in field mapping through Agworld, Alturas Ranches has been able to become more precise with their purchasing and realize instant savings.

"The way Agworld presents the information sparks inquisitiveness, rekindles memory and naturally creates discussion among my crew."

Hunter Current
Alturas Ranches, Alturas, CA.
A diverse farming business

When it comes to diverse farming operations, Alturas Ranches located at Alturas in Modoc county, North-eastern California, can measure up with the best. Alturas Ranches boasts 100,000 acres of rangeland used for running Angus cross cattle and Boer cross goats as well as a commercial hunting operation. Next to rangeland, Alturas Ranches also measures 30,000 acres of irrigated cultivation that is divided in 450 individual fields. Main crops grown at Alturas Ranches are a rotation of alfalfa, a range of grain varieties and wild rice. Alturas Ranches has a workforce of 40 persons year-round, increasing to 80 in season.

Family member and managing director Hunter Current explains that it is exactly the size of the ranch and the diversity of crops that made him explore the option of implementing Agworld within his operation: "When we used to plan and report, we just took field average – which was the best data we had available. But, especially with alfalfa hay and using one stack yard for multiple fields for example, this quickly got very inaccurate. So, we soon realized that we needed to build a better dataset and gain the ability to extract solid intelligence from this dataset."

"When we had a look at Agworld, the main thing that caught our eye was the ability to visualize our data. Within our grain program we grow barley, rye, red wheat, Yamhill, Alvena, Triticale and other bearded and beardless varieties. With all these varieties it is real easy to lose sight of the profit per field and variety, so we really liked the fact that Agworld allows us to visualize our data and is able to present this to us in the form of a color-coded map."

"The way Agworld presents the information sparks inquisitiveness, rekindles memory and naturally creates discussion among my crew. When you can see a field that's dark green and the yield per acre is high, you visually imprint that on your mind to say yes – that's where our stronger soils are, that's where we get a better irrigation, or that's where we did a fertilizer study for example. Having this visible in Agworld really makes us more aware of how we are performing and where we might have to adjust."
Sandhill Organic Wild Rice

Most grain varieties grown by Alturas Ranches are pretty mainstream and get sold to buyers across the eastern seaboard for either human consumption or as cattle feed, depending on the specifications. With the decline of the dairy industry in California, the majority of alfalfa production now gets exported as big bales to countries like China, UAE and Japan, with the rest either being sold in small bales to the local retail market or processed on-site in a pellet mill.

Alturas Ranches also grows a niche product on their farm: wild rice – which isn’t grown in very many locations. Hunter elaborates: “California grows a lot of medium-grain and short-grain rice and in years when the white rice market wasn’t great, some growers that were Minnesota natives started to trial wild rice here. And because we are fairly far north in California, we actually do have the required chilled dormancy days here.”

“Together with our partner Andean Naturals, who focus on sustaining traditional quinoa cultivation which helps support local Bolivian communities, we have created a single origin wild rice product called Sandhill Organic Wild Rice. Sandhill is named for the migratory Sandhill cranes which make their habitat in our paddies and we have really seen a tremendous uptake of this product as people love the principles and ideas behind Andean Naturals and Sandhill organic wild rice.”

“Although wild rice is a niche product that we are passionate about, we do have to ensure that it is a profitable venture for us at the same time. And this is where Agworld comes in and really helps us out – it shows us exactly where we have made a profit as expected, or where we need to lift our game a bit perhaps. Growing wild rice is a bit more cost-intensive than other crops too: seed stock gets stored in its dedicated cold storage facility for example in 1,500-pound tote cubes filled with water at 32 degrees all winter – and when it needs to get planted we wake it up and put it out there. So we have to make sure we keep track of all these kinds of costs and ensure we remain profitable. On the other hand, last year we flooded 300 acres of ground that we did not apply any seed to, in the second year and we still received a record crop out of those fields; it’s always nice when that happens!”

Creating efficiencies

The leadership team at Alturas Ranches uses Agworld in many parts of their daily work, from planning right through to post-season analysis. There are some specific areas however where Agworld helps Alturas Ranches create efficiencies according to Hunter: “When we just implemented Agworld, we did not have accurate mapping of every single field and so when we ordered our inputs, the amount would just never be correct for each field – Agworld helped us rectify this real quick.”

“Moving from there though, Agworld has really become beneficial in helping us manage our logistics. We have close to 450 fields here and Agworld helps us understand on a daily basis where our machinery is and what they are doing. We have guys swathing hay, baling hay, cutting rice, cutting grain – all at the same time in some parts of the season! It really is a logistical orchestra and Agworld is our conductor...ha!”
“Something else that is really important to us is the season review. When we move into our down season, Agworld really is the tool that allows us to go back and analyze our season thoughtfully and in a lot of detail. It is really like a transparency that allows us to see all of the activity and cost of production etc. post facto. The way I see it, we are still getting a better comprehension of how Agworld works every day and we’re excited for the next two to three years to have an even more complete and real-time dataset that allows us to make sharper turns during the season and adjust our operation immediately when we have to.”

“The way I see it, for an operation of our size it’s easy to become an oil tanker and lose the ability to make sharp turns in crop-management decisions. Agworld makes sure that we’re a sports car instead; it keeps us nimble!”

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

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