

CASE STUDY



CREATING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH VISIBILITY

CHALLENGE

JD Farms has had a number of very wet seasons in a row, causing severe flooding in the short term, and the soil to become more alkaline in the medium to long term. The Strand & Durham families now have to try new crops and novel crop management methods in order to find the most profitable way to farm the soil in its new condition. They knew that they needed a sophisticated platform to create plans and budgets and record their results, in order to find the best way to utilize these fields moving forward.

SOLUTION

Prior to moving back to his family farming operation, Jason Strand gained experience with using Agworld while working for a large Midwestern retail operation as a Precision Ag Specialist. Jason wanted to be able to achieve the same results on their family farm as he had achieved for his clients previously and therefore chose to adopt Agworld into the family operation.

RESULT

By utilizing Agworld, JD Farms is now able to create accurate plans and budgets per field and turn these plans into actual records throughout the season. As Agworld provides the management team with visibility into the results achieved, they are now able to use that information and create the most profitable and most sustainable plans for future seasons.

JD Farms

LOCATION	Ellendale, ND
OPERATION	Cropping
CROPS	Corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats, sunflowers
SIZE	8000 acres
EMPLOYEES	1-5

“We need to keep improving our sustainability and profitability, which requires us to have visibility in what we do, and Agworld offers us that visibility across our business.”

Jason Strand • JD Farms, Ellendale, ND.



From airborne avionics to farming in North Dakota

To most people, this might not seem like a likely career path, but it was for Jason Strand. Jason spent 18 years in the United States Air Force as an Airborne Systems Engineer, before starting a career in agriculture at Frontier Cooperative in North Bend, NE. After spending 6 years at Frontier Cooperative as Precision Applicator and Precision Ag Specialist, Jason moved back to Ellendale, ND to become part of the family farming operation. The area was homesteaded in 1989 by Jason's great-grandfather and Jason now farms around 8,000 acres together with his cousin Joel Durheim, cropping a rotation of corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats and sunflowers.

Jason: "Coming from an airborne electronics background, moving into precision agriculture actually makes a lot of sense as I was dealing a lot with soil probes, tractor monitors, GPS systems and other advanced electronics at Frontier Cooperative. I was born and raised on our family farm in North Dakota and so being able to combine my passion for farming and expertise in electronics really worked well for me."

After working for Frontier Cooperative for 6 years, Jason decided it was time to 'come home' and start his own farming career. Technology however also plays a big role for Jason on his own farm: "Having used a number of different agricultural technologies previously, with Agworld being one of them, I had a pretty good idea of which technologies are beneficial to implement on our family farm. It was great to work with farmers from a retailer's perspective, as it has provided me with a lot of different insights into how other farmers run their farming operation, how they use certain technologies to achieve their goals, and how we can capitalize on this in our own situation."



Starting the season with a plan

One of the big advantages of utilizing Agworld on their farm according to Joel Durheim is the ability to create accurate plans for the season ahead: "Being able to sit down and go over every single field in detail is really important for us. Even if we're not completely sure yet, at least the plan gives us an idea so we have something to refer to next spring. The plan is also useful for when we sit down with our agronomist, fertilizer rep or chemical sales rep, as it tells us exactly what we need at which stage of the season."

Jason adds: “Having accurate plans available in Agworld also cuts down on uncertainty, especially when you work together with multiple people in a farm operation. Farm staff don’t need to wait and ask someone else what to do anymore, for example, they can just open Agworld and see exactly where they need to go spray, what needs to be planted where or how much fertilizer needs to be spread. Having the Agworld plans seamlessly connected with the day-to-day workflow makes life so much easier for us on every level.”

Improving ROI

One of the goals that Jason and Joel have set for themselves, like many other farmers, is to improve the return on investment on certain parts of fields that they know are under-performing. Jason: “By having all our data on the same platform, we can start to weed out what the well performing acres are, what the least performing acres are, and how we can potentially improve them to improve our overall productivity.”

Part of this data is geospatial, which they collect via Agworld’s integration with PCT. Jason: “We used to use a different platform and provider for this but, since I’ve moved home, I’m doing this myself through PCT and Agworld; soil sampling, precision prescription writing for both seeding and fertilizing, analyzing yield data and so on. All this data by itself is very helpful, but we still need to work this back to profitability per field or zone, which is what Agworld offers us.”

Joel: “We don’t want to focus on yield as the continuous improvement, because no matter what your yield is, it’s still not productive or sustainable if you’re not making an increased return on investments. It’s your ROI that counts, not just your yields. Having all our data available on the same platform really helps us work through a lot of different crop management scenarios and work out what’s best in the end.”

Creating visibility in challenging situations

Where large parts of North Dakota agriculture have gravitated towards growing just corn and soybeans, JD Farms grows a number of different crops that used to be grown in the area 30 or 40 years ago, such as sunflowers, rye, wheat and oats. Joel: “We like the rotational aspects and the spreading of our risks from just two crops to four or more crops, it allows us to ‘hedge our bets’ and makes us more sustainable as a farming operation.”

Another reason for Jason and Joel to grow a more diverse range of crops in recent years are some very specific soil conditions. Joel: “The last four seasons in this area have been really wet, which resulted in a lot of flooded out areas and, because they were so wet for a prolonged period of time, they’re now very sodic due to the increased water table levels. Having an alkaline soil makes growing a crop challenging, so now we’re focusing on whether or not we can improve these areas and fix them, whether we need to take them out of production, or if there is something else that will profitably grow in these areas.”



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Jason Strand
JD Farms, Ellendale, ND.



Jason: “We’re limited in our ability to re-engineer these fields with tiling due to costs and water rights, so our solution has to come from the way we farm these fields. What this means in practice is that we try a lot of different ways to manage a variety of crops on these fields and then calculate at the end of the season what the financial return is, which is where Agworld is very important to us. We wouldn’t be able to do this if we didn’t have a system to put our data into so that we can remember exactly what we did and what the results were, four years ago for example, and compare these results with other seasons and other crops.

Joel: “Our challenge has been to find which varieties and crops utilize the moisture best, and data has been very helpful in deciding which variety can perform better. With Agworld we also always have this data with us, on our iPad, so that we can access it wherever we need it and ground truth it in the field for example.”

Joel continues: “The way I see it, farming is all about continual improvement, whether it be profitability, soil, or anything else; we constantly have to improve how we do things so we can keep the farm alive for future generations. If you’re not documenting what you do and don’t look at the data and other results, then how can you make a decision at the end of it?”

Jason concludes with: “With the size of our operation and a rotation of six different crops, it’s simply impossible to remember everything; you need a sophisticated system to store the data so that you can keep benefiting from it in future, and that is exactly what Agworld offers us. We need to keep improving our sustainability and profitability, which requires us to have visibility in what we do, and Agworld offers us that visibility across our business. I love using Agworld, and there’s nobody I wouldn’t recommend using Agworld to.”



IMPROVING PROFITABILITY IN AGRICULTURE

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