



Precision in Every Pass: How Caledonia Farmers Elevator Digitized Agronomy Workflows



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■ Challenge

As Caledonia Farmers Elevator expanded its agronomy and custom application services across multiple locations, inconsistent paper-based systems made coordination increasingly difficult. Each salesperson kept their own Excel templates and paper maps, creating version chaos and inefficiencies. Applicators risked spreading errors, lost maps, delayed jobs, and management struggled to verify whether work was completed accurately. With no central dispatch or standardized workflow, the cooperative needed a solution that would streamline operations, reduce compliance risk, and unify its team across sites.

■ Solution

Caledonia adopted Agworld in 2018, transitioning from paper and Excel to a fully digital, web-based workflow. Using Agworld for soil sampling, recommendations, and work orders, the co-op centralized data and standardized planning across sales staff, applicators, and tender drivers. Work orders became digital and color-coded, making it easy for operators to self-dispatch and track progress in real time. The integration of Agworld with drone spraying operations and automated app logs simplified compliance reporting. Every user, from crop advisors to tender drivers, could now see the same data, work more efficiently, and eliminate confusion.

■ Outcome

Agworld has transformed Caledonia's efficiency, accountability, and customer communication. Work orders that once took hours now move seamlessly from agronomist to applicator to billing. USDA and state reporting for drone applications is completed in minutes rather than hours. Errors from lost maps or incomplete jobs are a thing of the past, and customers now receive professional digital application logs instead of handwritten notes. Most importantly, the platform has empowered staff, from sales to field operators, to work independently yet collaboratively, building a faster, smarter, and more transparent agronomy business.

A Co-op Rooted in Community

Founded over a century ago, Caledonia Farmers Elevator has grown into a multi-location cooperative serving southern Michigan's diverse farming community. With locations in Caledonia, Lake Odessa, and Charlotte, the co-op provides agronomy, feed, grain, and retail services to hundreds of grower-owners. "Caledonia started over a hundred years ago in the city of Caledonia," explains Nic Wheelan, Lake Odessa Location Manager and Agronomist. "Then it transitioned to Lake Odessa, and in the last five to ten years we've added the Charlotte

Caledonia Farmers Elevator

Lake Odessa, MI

Founded
1918

Crops
Corn, wheat, soybeans, alfalfa

"The efficiencies and having everything all in one place make all the difference. With Agworld we're able to work faster, smarter, and more transparent. We'd never go back to the old way."

Nic Wheelan
Location Manager & Agronomist



location. I'd say we're probably 40% agronomy now, with feed and some retail and grain as well."

The co-op serves around 160,000–180,000 acres annually through custom application, with approximately 15,000 acres of grid soil sampling done each year. "We've got clay, we've got blow sand, so there's not a one-size-fits-all program," says Agronomist Maddie Gingrich. "That's the hardest part, tailoring everything specifically to each grower."

From Paper Maps to a Digital Platform

Before Agworld, Caledonia operated largely on spreadsheets and paper maps, a system that became unmanageable as the business grew. "We were using Excel sheets," Nic recalls. "One person would send out the sheet, then each of us would change it a little, then someone would accidentally delete a formula. Nobody knew if the spreadsheet was even right. Having a web-based system where you can't completely change a formula is a huge benefit. Having everyone on the same plan makes things so much cleaner."

Paper maps often went missing mid-job. "Every now and then when we were using paper maps, one applicator would spread the first half of a field and then the maps disappeared," Maddie says. "Now everyone has access all the time, there's no confusion on what needs to be done or who drove past what." The shift to Agworld unified Caledonia's operations under one shared, digital workflow.

Caledonia doesn't have a central dispatcher but instead, applicators and tender drivers manage their own daily routes using Agworld's shared system. "We have all the sales personnel, every applicator, and even a couple of tender drivers using Agworld," Nic says. "They can help coordinate the day with the applicator instead of sitting for ten minutes planning where to go next. The color coding lets them filter by dry or liquid applications, so everyone knows exactly what's theirs." This decentralized model has empowered field staff and eliminated bottlenecks.

Compliance and Drone Application

Caledonia is among the first ag retailers in Michigan to offer drone spraying as part of its custom application services. The co-op uses Agworld to manage the additional compliance requirements that come with aerial application. "It's been really nice having all the proper data and compliance information in one place," Nic says. "You have to turn in a monthly report to the state, and Agworld makes it easy to pull everything into one report." Maddie adds, "Legally we have to send out application logs to customers, and now we can just send a copy directly from Agworld with the invoice. That covers our obligation to report, and it looks so much cleaner."

Agworld has not only eliminated paperwork but has dramatically improved the speed and accuracy of Caledonia's workflow. "The main benefit of Agworld for us has been speed," Nic says. "The speed of getting work orders to the applicators, the speed of billing, and the ease of looking up past data for growers while you're talking to them. You don't have to dig through files, you can pull it right up." The system



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Maddie Gingrich
Agronomist, Caledonia Farmers Elevator
Lake Odessa, MI



ensures that no work slips through the cracks. “If we can’t get it done in the fall, we just transfer it to the next season. When we pull that grower up next year, we can see exactly what’s left to do before moving on.”

Collaboration and Support

One of the biggest impacts of Agworld has been cultural; enhancing teamwork and communication across departments. “The Agworld team’s been really good to us,” says Maddie. “They’re very responsive, and we feel like we already knew them before we even met in person. They’ve been great to work with.” Nic adds, “When we have a question or idea, we know it’s being moved up the ladder. There have been times we get a call a couple months later: ‘Hey, remember that idea you mentioned? It’s live in the software now.’”

While adopting any new system comes with a learning curve, Caledonia’s team quickly embraced Agworld, and they wouldn’t go back. “Our applicators definitely grumbled at first,” Maddie admits. “But now they’d never go back. The efficiencies and having everything in one place make it worth it.” The co-op plans to expand its Agworld use further. “We’d like to use the financial planning side more,” Nic says. “Once we can get our pricing structure fully integrated, we’ll use it for prepay tools and farm planning too.”

For Caledonia Farmers Elevator, Agworld has become the backbone of operational efficiency. What began as a tool to replace spreadsheets has evolved into a unified system driving faster communication, greater accuracy, and stronger compliance. “The efficiencies and having everything all in one place makes all the difference,” Maddie concludes. “With Agworld we’re able to work faster, smarter, and more transparently. We’d never go back to the old way.”



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