Noland Farms, Inc.

Blue Mound, IL

Summer 2010 Newsletter

Growing for the Future

by Grant Noland

▲ *l-r: Duane, Neil, Dennis and Grant Noland*

Greetings from our family at Noland Farms! I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and relaxing on a beach with your toes in the sand, or at least somewhere with adequate air conditioning. As one of the hottest summers in recent memory will soon transition to the cooler nights of fall, our focus is shifting to the completion of projects and preparation of machinery for harvest.

In reflecting on the first two years of my farming career, I have learned that:

- Soil conditions can be too wet or too dry.
- If a machine moves, it will break down at the most inopportune time.
- Even downhill, a tractor will not travel faster than 30 mph.
- Remember to pack your lunch (and dinner) during harvest.
- Turning a wrench will not fix a software glitch in the yield monitor.
- My grandpa Neil, uncle Dennis and dad all remember walking barefoot, uphill to school both ways (in the snow).
- And farmland is an asset that consistently yields strong returns.

A recent snapshot of America's farming population found that 25 percent of the operators were at least 65 years old. In contrast, only 8 percent of self-employed workers in nonagricultural industries are of that age. As a young producer actively engaged in the industry, these demographics present an exciting opportunity for growth. For an individual pursuing an avenue for tangible, earning assets, these statistics provide an excellent opportunity for investment.

Should you have interest in increasing your current land holdings or incorporating farmland into your investment portfolio, we would love the opportunity to assist in procuring a farm to fit your search criteria. Farms differ in value based on soil productivity, slope, tillable vs. non-tillable acres, development potential and many other characteristics. Each individual is searching for the property that best-fits his/her investment strategy and lifestyle. We would like to facilitate the process.

Summer Activities

With the grain market providing incentive to hold grain later into spring and summer, much of our corn was delivered during these periods. The challenges of last year carried into 2010 in the form of potential grain quality concerns due to kernel stress as a result of drying high-moisture corn. Our investment in a grain-monitoring computer system that automatically turns on-and-off bin fans annually allows for increased confidence in storing grain longer. The system paid great dividends, as quality was not an issue.

Summer improvements to our bin site have changed the view through the kitchen windows during breakfast for Duane and Tina. An additional bin for storing dry corn and a bin dedicated solely to wet corn out of the field have now risen to block the Macon County sunrise. We anticipate the increased capacity will allow for 85 more semi loads of corn stored on farm, which improves our operational efficiency and profitability. With the purchase of a high-capacity auger capable of unloading 12 trucks per hour, empty trucks will return to the field at a faster pace. Improvements to our drying system will transfer bushels through at a quicker rate and a lower cost per unit.

The 2010 application of herbicide to corn and soybeans progressed in a similar manner to this year's planting. With an adequate window of opportunity to finish spraying, we had the ability to address many secondary projects such as hauling rock and dirt to build new lanes at bin sites, spot-spraying troublesome, annual weeds and trees in ditches and waterways.

Research Plots

As I mentioned in the spring newsletter, our farm is committed to implementing practices that yield the strongest returns. We hope to collect solid data from our corn root growth promoter and starter fertilizer test plots. In early June, a representative of FB Sciences conducted on-farm testing to evaluate early progress in our corn root growth promoter test plot. The hand-held device (which looks similar to a weed-whacker) is raised above the corn and uses the Normalized Difference Vegetative Index (NDVI) as an indicator to measure the plant's growth and chlorophyll amount. Values were taken and compared for corn with and without the growth enhancer. The product aims to "promote healthier plants, increase yields, improve efficiency of applied or naturally-occurring nutrients, reduce soil chemistry tie-ups and help mitigate plant stress." The product will be tracked through the final stages of the growing season, and we look forward to reviewing the results through the combine's yield monitor this fall.

The starter fertilizer plot provided exciting visible variability shortly after the corn's emergence. Throughout the growing season, the corn planted without starter appeared a lighter shade of green, stood 12-15" shorter and produced a tassel a week later. We are eagerly anticipating whether a healthier, quicker-maturing plant will correlate to increased yields.

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Community Involvement

This summer, our family had the opportunity to provide the Blue Mound Fire Department with an area to conduct training exercises. An Air Evac helicopter flew in from Springfield to assist in the training. The firefighters staged a car crash in one of our waterways, worked to rescue a dummy trapped underneath the car and located a victim that had been ejected into a soybean field.

Our family also had the opportunity to serve food to the community at the Blue Mound Fall Festival. As first-year co-chairs of the festival's pork chop dinner, Grant and Logan enlisted the help of family and friends to serve 900 pork chops, potatoes, green beans and applesauce. With no reported cases of food poisoning, we have declared the dinner a success!