



Noland Farms, Inc.

Blue Mound, IL

2014 Volume 1

Greetings from our family at Noland Farms! As we welcome in a new year full of promise, we naturally evaluate the impact 2013 had on our family and business. A new Noland, Elizabeth Maye, entered this world in October, and we lost a cornerstone, Neil, a month later in November.

Life is truly an amazing cycle, and the recent holidays provided an excellent venue to celebrate the impact and importance of family within our multi-generational family farm. The weather's volatility throughout the year contributed to the rapid-acceleration of hair loss. The drought of 2012 transitioned into an abundance of spring rainfall, which led to planting delays across much of the Midwest. Mid-way through the growing season, the weather shifted back to drought-

like conditions experienced in 2012.

Even with the year's challenges, we were pleasantly surprised that corn and soybean yields were great. Too dry, too wet, too dry – apparently, a farmer must always have something to complain about!

Elizabeth ▶



▲ Hudson



▲ Hudson and Neil

Annual Recap

Over the past year, our family was fortunate to experience many exciting and new opportunities. Our farm's greatest assets are the team members dedicated to producing a crop, and the landowner partnerships that trust us with their land to cultivate.

The past year allowed us to expand the geographical area in which we operate to five counties in central Illinois. This growth blessed us with many new, valued relationships and provided a means to better risk management for corn and soybean production.

Technologically, an iPad was integrated into the cab of a tractor for 2013. Although the operator might have quietly preferred using it to watch movies or surf the internet, this tablet served as an extension to an existing monitor, with the ability to track and

analyze each corn kernel that was planted in a field. Following planting, we were able to utilize the iPad as a crop scouting tool. The GPS locator allowed us to walk through a field and determine plant population, seed placement and depth, and many other indicators at any point in the field. Amazing technology available to us today!

Our family is passionate about our community, agriculture and future growth of our industry. As we shared in a previous newsletter, this passion encouraged us to establish the Noland Family Agriculture, Horticulture and Sciences Scholarship for a graduating student at Meridian High School in Macon, Ill. The first recipient, James Brokaw, embodies the exact attributes our industry will need for continued growth. Agriculture is fortunate to have exceptional talent coming up the ranks, and we eagerly await the opportunity to award the scholarship in 2014 to a young leader.

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The future of our industry is also rooted in the education of urban and inner-city youth – consumers of the products we grow. As agricultural producers, the positive strides our business is making to provide a safe, stable food supply must be shared with the general public.

Once again, we were fortunate to host groups of Decatur Public School students through Camp Connections. The students' enthusiasm and curiosity allows for a great day on the farm (we all remember the thrill of a field trip). The tour's rotation typically features planting and harvest equipment, Erma's snack station (favorite among the kids), growing crops and offsite transport to a working cattle farm.

We must admit that pure exhaustion is the result of herding kids, and we do look forward to seeing the taillights of the last school bus driving away from the farm at the end of the day!

The mid-season farm tours were rounded out with a Brazilian delegation of soybean producers from the Mato Grosso region. Our farm served as a pit-stop from St. Louis to Chicago, and an opportunity to share production systems and philosophies. Whether the guests are third graders or fellow producers from another hemisphere, we consistently learn from those who visit our Blue Mound farm.

Throughout history, our industry has demonstrated the ability to experiment,



▲ **Edamame**

implement and advance. In previous newsletters, we have referenced our family farm's commitment to continual improvement through operational efficiency, profitability, safety, risk management, etc.

Highlighting one venture in 2013, we conducted the "Edamame Experiment." Visually, edamame appear very similar to a soybean, but the pods are harvested when still immature.

Managed by Blake Noland, three varieties from across the U.S. were grown on a plot in Macon County. The pods were harvested, blanched and bagged at the end of August and the first crop was deemed a success! As the production plan is developed for 2014, Blake has narrowed his focus on two varieties based on product performance in the previous year.

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*Decatur Public School students
visited Noland Farms, Inc.
through Camp Connections*



**Current operational updates
and new pictures
are available on
our website.**

www.nolandfarms.com

Farmland Investment

The current farmland market has provided exciting opportunities for those with current land holdings and individuals interested in purchasing a farm. We are excited to discuss investment opportunities!

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As we shift our focus to 2014, a few uncertainties rise above the rest. The dysfunction of those in Washington, D.C. has not allowed a new Farm Bill to be passed. The Farm Bill is the agricultural and food policy tool that outlines commodity, trade, rural development, food and nutrition (SNAP) and conservation programs. The components of the federal crop insurance program (a lifeline for producers in the drought of 2012) are part of this legislation. An additional area of concern (for profitability) pertains to the pace of commodity price erosion versus the production cost component. Gross revenue potential has fallen much quicker than the input side of the equation (tighter profit margins). The cyclical nature of our industry is no different than others, and one could suggest that Ag is transitioning toward a downturn.

We are extremely fortunate to participate in a global marketplace, so one must welcome supply and demand's dance! Even with the concerns expressed above, the upcoming year is full of potential. Managing risk has never been more important, and we have been active participants through hedging grain and securing fertilizers and fuel for the coming year. Spring is just around the corner!

Looking Forward