



A grain 'toasting' and storage operation is a 2-year-old venture at Earl Weaver's farm that has grown quickly. Instead of selling soybeans for cash, and then using the cash to buy processed beans for livestock feed, Weaver and many of his clients have been toasting the beans they raise and using the hulls and the beans for feed. Weaver toasts other grains as well.

Pa. Forage, Grassland Council

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from five to 10 brood sows before he bought the herd from his father.

Over time the hog operation grew to 120 brooders and some hogs for fattening. In 1978, he sold the pigs and went to a full dairy operation.

Weaver has been working with a 60-stall stanchion barn since the late 1970s and raises replacements on a one-tone basis, selling off what he doesn't need.

He has been feeding a TMR for sometime, and he's been feeding soybeans for about 20 years, he said. His rolling herd average is just more than 20,000 pounds of milk.

The change in the farm, since he installed the conservation devices, and since he started double-cropping rye in the corn strips to overwinter and then harvest in the spring, is great.

He said he feels as though installing the conservation practices has not only proven to be the correct thing to do in order to save the soil on his farm, but morally, he said it was the right thing to do.

"I believe that the ground is given to us to utilize to the best of our ability, and it is what God created it for. I try to use it so it will be there for the next generation."

He said the soil is a gift that sustains life and therefore should be revered as such, and not be destroyed through short term consideration of quick gain.

In fact, while he doesn't like to use the word "organic," because of the extremist connotations, he said he is trying to encourage the grow of microbes in the soil and larger invertebrates and organisms which indicate a healthy, fertile soil.

For example, over the years, with the use of the commonly recommended pesticides, the earthworm population on the farm had diminished. Not overnight, but over time.

With using conservation tillage techniques, by using crop rotation along with the long strips, he said he has been able to not have to use chemicals to combat corn rootworm. In fact, except for an emergency, he said he tries not to use any kind of pesticide. He does use some herbicides, as needed.

For the past 10 years, he has also used only his cow manure for fertilizer. He hasn't applied any commercial fertilizer and he said his soil tests are so consistent that he only has to test every three years.

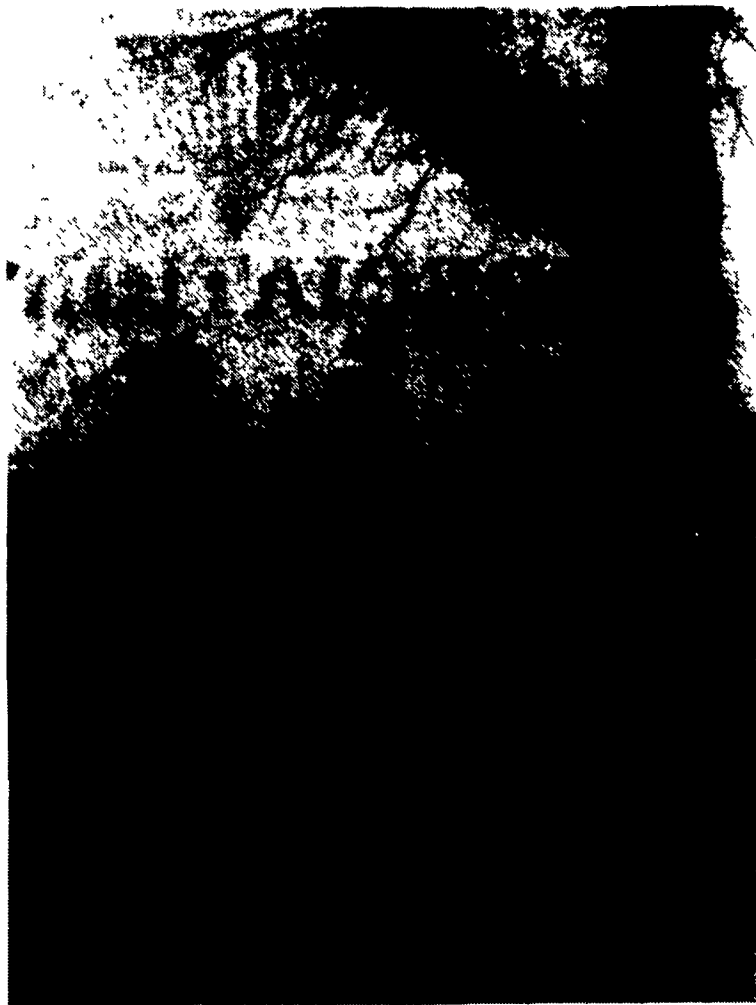
And not only did he say he feels good about how the soil and the soil organisms have responded — he said he enjoys seeing the great number of worm castings these days — but he has increased the profitability and competitiveness of the operation.

As far as what lies in the future, Weaver said he intends to spend his time cropping and caring for his fields and running the soybean processing business.

The new business, called Weaver's Toasted Grains, has grown rapidly in the past two years. He said some people approached him about getting involved in such a business, and after some research and consideration, he made the investment and has been working at it since.

His dairy herd, which he oversees, is being managed by Carl and Wilma Weaver. Carl is originally from Weaverland Farm, a nextdoor neighbor to Earl Weaver. After about 20 years being employed in woodworking, he and his wife decided to get back to farming and have been working to make the adjustment back. "There have been a lot of changes in the past 20 years," he said.

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From the left, farm owner Earl Weaver, discusses calf-starter ration formulation with his nutrition consultant Ray Brechbill and with herdsman Carl Weaver.

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