

## Winnebago County

# Farmers See Benefit of No-Till and Cover Crops



### Background

Albright Brothers and Sons, LLC has been farming in Omro, Wis., since 1948. Several years ago, brothers, James and David, passed the farm on to their two sons, Jamie and Casey, respectively. Together, they own and operate about 550 acres in Winnebago County.

Up until 2012, Jamie worked in construction, but decided to go back to farming. When he came back to the farm, he wanted to make some conservation-minded changes. The brothers implemented no-till and still practice it today. They are also committed to planting cover crops after wheat. One more improvement Jamie initiated was to keep and utilize wheat straw instead of selling it off the farm. The brothers use it for steer bedding, then, spread it back onto the fields afterwards. "Its value in nutrients is worth far more than the selling price," said Jamie.

### Program Successes

"Jamie first came into the local U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in 2014, to apply for the Conservation Stewardship Program," said Merrie Schamberger, Winnebago County District Conservationist. Since then, he was awarded an Environmental Quality Incentives Program contract to plant cover crops for five years. Jamie is committed to soil health. "It's refreshing to see a farmer so passionate about it," said Schamberger.

Jamie keeps track of his soil health and has noticed a difference since adopting soil health practices, including no-till and cover crops. "In 2012, soil tests were coming back low in organic matter, phosphorus and potassium. Implementing no-till, planting cover crops and using moderate fertilizer, we have seen our numbers steadily increase. Organic matter, phosphorus and potassium have all increased. You can definitely see an increase in water infiltration as a result; less ponding and less runoff," said Albright.

In the future, Jamie plans to partner with NRCS to install grassed waterways on some of his cropland. He wants to continue his soil health efforts and keep topsoil from washing off the land.



*(Left to right) Jamie, Casey and Jim Albright on their farm.*



*No-till soybeans are shown planted into corn stubble on Albright Brothers and Sons, LLC Farm.*