



Helping People...

...Help the Land.



Beginning Farmer Utilizes EQIP to Improve Livestock Operation



National Guard soldiers observe a field planted in cover crops.



Example of Simpson's mobile chicken house.



Tony Branam, NRCS District Conservationist, discusses riparian buffers.

Darby Simpson, a farmer in Morgan County, owns and operates Simpson Family Farm where he raises natural beef and poultry for local markets.

Simpson's goals are to maintain a diverse natural, sustainable and efficient livestock operation with minimal economic inputs, without the use of feeds that include antibiotics, steroids or growth hormones and to coexist with the native environment surrounding the farm and their way of life.

A few years ago, Simpson began experimenting with raising chickens in "chicken tractors" (a mobile pen on wheels that allows the birds to be moved around the farm while keeping them contained and protected with their food and water) on a hay field in front of his house. After being laid off from his job as a heating and air conditioning engineer in 2009, Simpson ramped up his poultry operation by increasing the number of chickens and adding turkeys. Simpson has been successful in selling his natural meat products on line and at local farmers markets.

NRCS and other conservation partners began working with Simpson two years ago to develop a conservation plan and discuss possible funding sources to implement the plan. Recommended practices included converting cropland to no-till pasture and hay and installing perimeter and interior fencing and watering facilities as a first step in implementing an extended rotational grazing system.

When it came to paying for these recommended conservation practices, Simpson was eligible as a new farmer to apply for funding under the NRCS Environmental Quality Initiative Program (EQIP). The EQIP program provides financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices to address natural resource concerns.

NRCS worked closely with its conservation partners (the Morgan and Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Indiana Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources) to provide direct technical assistance in designing the practices and getting the work done.



With EQIP funds, Simpson was able to install more than 4,000 feet of interior fence to create paddocks; an estimated 2,960 feet of pipeline, eight watering facilities and a water pumping plant all to serve 28.8 acres of prescribed rotational grazing.

In addition to EQIP funds, a Clean Water Indiana grant through the State Department of Agriculture funds helped Simpson convert cropland to pasture/hay and install the exterior fence. The grant also made it possible for the Johnson and Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide assistance for engineering designs and construction oversight, as well as no-till planting equipment.

There are significant benefits to the environment from the implementation of this conservation plan. For example, conversion of the crop field to a permanent cover of pasture and hay will save one ton of soil per acre per year on the 17.6 acre field. This is a savings of 17 tons of top soil per year. In addition, there are immeasurable savings in fertilizer cost, pesticides not running off into nearby Stotts Creek, carbon lost to the atmosphere, and the fossil fuels used in this operation.

Because of his holistic philosophy and approach to his farming operation, Simpson is often called upon as a speaker and he has allowed his farm to be used for tours. Simpson is well aware of how his farming practices fit into the big picture of sustainable agriculture and is pleased with the conservation improvements on his property. As an engineer by training Simpson is very hands-on and constantly analyzing his plan and checking in on work to be done. NRCS and its Indiana conservation partners will continue work with Simpson and his family to further improve the natural resources on their land.

Landowner Trains Soldiers for Overseas Mission

Because of Simpson's holistic philosophy and approach to his operation he was asked to speak with a contingent of National Guard soldiers of the 1-14 Agribusiness Development Team as part of their training while stationed at Camp Atterbury. The Team's mission is to assist Afghanistan farmers in developing sustainable agricultural products. Simpson showcased his conservation practices, including fencing, cover crops, riparian buffers and livestock operation. The Simpson farm is a perfect example of sustainable agriculture and good land stewardship that will be useful to farmers in Afghanistan.



Darby Simpson, landowner, discusses his livestock operation to National Guard soldiers.