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Against All Odds

by Matt Hagny

Alan Mindemann defied the odds to bootstrap his farm into existence over the last 9 years, daring on a different course from the outset: No-till with diverse rotations. Utterly going against southwest Oklahoma's conformist mentality of monoculture wheat with grazing and massive tillage, Alan had to fend off plenty of criticism. Not to mention he practically had to invent a functional no-till system for his region.



Alan did, in fact, grow up on a wheat & cattle operation north of Lawton, Oklahoma, and today custom farms cropland for his dad and brother. But the path from then till now is not exactly what you might guess. It's more like traveling from Wichita to Oklahoma City via Los Angeles—and on foot.

As a young lad, Alan found the mechanical aspect of farm machinery fascinating, and farming ran in his blood. But no opportunity was to be had for a livelihood on his father's farm. Alan instead held an

eclectic series of jobs over the years, including working on a drilling rig, as a diesel mechanic, and with the Civil Service. After one particularly unpleasant work experience, he decided what he really wanted to do was farm—Damn the torpedoes! Alan set about the task with virtually no savings, no equity, and little support from family. If the received wisdom was that it couldn't be done, Alan paid it no heed.

What Alan did have was considerable inquisitiveness and a good business sense. In his own words, his farm operation used no-till from the outset because he had no choice—



Mindemann's foray into cotton production paid off in '04.

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