

Leading Edge

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On The Plains

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Covering His Bets

by Keith Berns

Gail Fuller's informal motto is "Feeding billions daily," derived from the fact that a single spoonful of healthy soil contains more living organisms than all of the people in China. One of Gail's primary goals has been rejuvenating his soil, and clear evidence of this achievement is found on his Emporia, KS, farm. Using an unorthodox system of forages, cover crops, grain crops, double-crops, and intensive grazing of cattle under continuous no-till, Fuller is turning his soil into the envy of his county.



The journey to productive and resilient soil (and profitability) has been long, and not without roadblocks and detours, but the accruing results keep Gail steadfastly marching towards his goals.

Gail has been farming all his life, starting as a high school teenager on the family farm on the edge of the Flint Hills along the beautiful Neosho River north of Emporia. His path to becoming a no-tiller began early. He explains, "In the late '70s, we had a neighbor who was no-tilling beans and wheat, and

even though he didn't really have the right equipment, he was making it work pretty good, and I watched closely and was interested in the concept. By the mid-'80s, my agronomist said we needed to try this no-till thing, so we tried and failed miserably, and gave it up after a few years." In analyzing the reasons for this failure, Gail mentions inferior equipment and some compaction issues, but attributes the majority of the failure to a lack of knowledge. Determined not to continue on in ignorance, Gail has been a diligent student of no-till ever since.



Photo by Gail Fuller.

Gail's dc corn emerging from where oats + pea forage was recently chopped. In all four years he's had dc corn, it's outyielded his primary-crop corn, and with far fewer inputs.

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