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BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2024 EDITION



PUTTING 2023 IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

As we start the 2024 season, a reflection on 2023 makes us super thankful for the recent rains and recharging of our subsoil moisture levels. 2023 was frankly the most challenging year from a moisture standpoint that I have seen in my lifetime. Our wells were rarely shut down outside of oil changes or servicing of our pivot systems. While challenging, it also taught us some lessons on preparedness, patience, and gave us opportunities to get better at what we do day in and day out on the farm. We have some farms that have already received as much moisture as they received in the 2023 season.

2024 ADJUSTMENTS

Greg and I are always looking for ways to improve the farm and grow in our roles to make us better. One of the things that we have really focused on the last two years is PPP (Prior Proper Planning) as trying to coordinate nutrient stockpiling, etc. in organic really requires us to know or have a close idea of our 2025 crop plan right now. We are already positioning nutrients and ordering cover crop cocktails for our 2025 crop.

As we move forward with the 2024 crop, we are excited to have Garrett Parr join us full time in a Field Operations Supervisor role on the farm. Garrett has worked part

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time for us during high school and college and we are glad he has chosen to join us full time. Greg continues to lead as Operations Manager. Innes Singleton, who is entering his third year, Aiden, part time and our newest employee Shaun Wood, who hails from Cape Town, South Africa complete our operations team. Katie continues to keep things in line in our office as my Executive Assistant and fulfills roles with both Weeks Family Farms and our seed business, Sustainable Seed Solutions. Amanda continues in her part time CFO role for us and the seed business. 2024 brings some cropping changes for us as we once again will be growing popcorn for Preferred Popcorn out of Chapman, NE however, this time it will be organic popcorn. Another new crop in 2024 is Organic Blue Corn and we are excited to see how this turns out. Our Organic Wheat continues to make its way into Kashi cereals and our organic corn goes many places but one you may recognize is SmartChicken Organic chickens.

FAMILY UPDATE



Our Family continues to do well and we are for the first time in many years thankful to not be treating a cancer patient in our family. Kristi continues as the enrollment coordinator for Hastings Catholic Schools and loves having her office in the elementary school as the kids brighten her day. Aiden just finished his first year at Kansas State University majoring in Ag Economics with a minor in finance and risk management. He achieved

Deans List both semesters and is a member of AGR (Alpha Gamma Rho) fraternity which is the Ag fraternity at K-State. He is interning this summer with Clear Frontier Ag Management. Brynn just finished her junior year of high school and continues to play volleyball, tennis and participates in FFA, Speech, teens for life, etc. at her school. She is looking forward to her senior year and deciding where she will attend college. Delaney is going to be in 8th grade next fall and plays volleyball, basketball, track and participates in FFA. She is our resident Chicken Rancher, and her hens get us around 15-18 eggs per day currently.

We continue to look for opportunities that fit to advance our acreage on the farm and are extremely thankful for the landowners we work with. We appreciate the open communication with our landowners and the next generation to continue building on the relationships we have. We continue to invest time, money, and technology in all of our farms to continually improve the soil, protect the natural resources, and improve overall productivity of the farms. We appreciate all of you and your willingness to let us manage your properties. We pray you all have a wonderful 2024!

Ryan



NEW TECH IN AG

WRITTEN BY GARRETT PARR

As stewards of this land, we are constantly striving to improve our farming practices while maintaining the integrity of our environment. We are excited to share some of the innovative technologies we are utilizing on the farm, all of which are aimed at enhancing efficiency, productivity, and sustainability.

We have added Raven rate controllers to our manure spreading equipment. These controllers allow us to precisely regulate the application rate of nutrients. It will automatically adjust the rate of application based on speed. By accurately applying nutrients where they are needed most, we can enhance soil fertility leading to greater crop health and higher yields.

Another exciting technology on the farm is the integration of pivot technology with Fieldwise, allowing us to control pivots remotely from our smartphones. This enables us to monitor and adjust pivots in real time, ensuring optimal water management while saving time from having to drive out to each pivot to manually start, change direction, or adjust speed. Additionally, we have implemented the use of Phytech moisture sensors that provide precise and real-time monitoring of soil moisture levels through the convenience of an app on our phones. The sensors measure soil moisture at different depths, allowing us to optimize irrigation schedules and water usage by accurately assessing soil moisture conditions. This helps us to make decisions regarding irrigation, leading to more efficient water management and improved crop yields. These sensors can detect stress in plants early on, allowing for timely applications of irrigation to prevent yield loss. Through these irrigation technologies we maximize our time, reduce water use, and make crop management decisions through real time updates.

This fall we will be working closely with our local John Deere dealer to demo Deere's Auto Unload technology on the combine and fully Autonomous Tractor for our fall tillage work. Currently we use John Deere's machine sync that allows the combine operator to set a home point for the grain cart. As the grain cart operator approaches the home point, the operator engages the system, and machine sync takes over and keeps the combine and grain cart in the set relative positions to each other. The combine operator has the option to push a nudge forward or backward to the grain cart to change the relative position and fill the length of the cart. Auto Unload is taking machine sync capabilities one step farther by freeing up the combine operator to focus on harvesting what is in front of them. An imaging system looks at the cart dimensions and the fill level in the cart and does any nudging that the combine operator was previously responsible for. The imaging system can decide to move the grain cart forward or backward based on the grain pile it sees. The combine operator still has some control over the fill by selecting how full they want the cart, and what the fill strategy should be (front to back, back to front).

John Deere's autonomous tractor is equipped with GPS, cameras, and sensors, which enable it to operate without a driver. The tractor uses real-time data and machine learning algorithms to navigate the field accurately, avoid obstacles, and perform tasks with precision. One of the key benefits of this autonomous tractor is its ability to work continuously without fatigue, ensuring consistent performance throughout the day and night. This continuous operation can significantly increase productivity and reduce the time required for fieldwork. By optimizing field operations, the autonomous tractor can help reduce soil compaction and minimize fuel consumption.

As we continue to embrace these technological advancements, we remain committed to sustainable farming practices and environmental stewardship. By leveraging the latest innovations in precision agriculture, we can optimize resource use, minimize environmental impact, and ensure the long-term viability of the farm.



**9th Annual
Landowners Summit +
Vendor Appreciation**

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER
5TH
2024**

**Invitation and
Details to Follow!**

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

COVER CROP UPDATE

WRITTEN BY GREG ECKHARDT

For the 2024 growing season we made the decision to try a few new cover crop mixes, as well as adjust some ratios in previously used mixes. The new mix we planted in 2023 for the 2024 season is a 7-way mix including Baldy Clover, Brown Flax, Spring Oats, Mung Beans, Radish, Sunn Hemp and Forage Sorghum. This mix was planted following our wheat crop that was harvested in July. We had successful growth and the cover crop grew very thick and even. It was fully mature by the fall of 2023 and as expected, winter killed it off. The overall purpose of this mix was to give the soil the necessary nitrogen needed for the following corn crop. This particular cover crop mix needs 60 days to do its job and since it will not survive the winter, it makes it a great choice to follow summer harvested wheat.



The adjusted ratio mix included planting Hairy Vetch and Elbon Rye, which are both cover crops that we have used numerous times in the past. However last fall we greatly increased the amount of Vetch in the mix. By planting increased levels of Vetch, we should be able to cover most, if not all, of our nitrogen needs for the corn crop. Vetch is a nitrogen fixing legume that after terminating and incorporating it into the soil, it will release the nitrogen back for the corn plant to consume. We will terminate it when it flowers by shredding it with a mower and then tilling it back in the soil. As opposed to 7-way mix above, this cover crop will survive through the winter or “over winter” making it useful on other fields.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Garrett Parr - Operations Supervisor

Tell us about your family.

I am the youngest of three kids and have two sisters.

When did you start at Weeks Family Farms?

I began working in May of 2020 during the summer while in high school.

What are your responsibilities in your position?

My responsibilities include field and yard maintenance, analysis and reporting of field data and operation of equipment.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is the day to day diversity of jobs and overcoming challenges that arise daily.

What is your least favorite part of your job?

My least favorite part of my job is any task that involves the use of a weed eater.

Where is your hometown?

I grew up in the country just east of Hastings, NE.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy going to the lake and taking care of my cattle herd that I run with my dad.

What do you appreciate most about your job at Weeks Family Farms?

I appreciate the positive work environment at Weeks Family Farms and everyone that works here is fun to be around.

What did you want to be when you were younger?

A farmer.

How did you become involved in farming and ag?

Growing up I would always go to work with my dad because he worked for a farmer and dad had cattle.

I showed in 4-H for 10 years and began my own cattle herd.

What is your favorite food?

A medium rare steak.



KEEP IN TOUCH!

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