



South Dakota Soil Health Producer Profiles

The **South Dakota Voices for Soil Health** are a group of people who share an understanding and respect for the soil resource. The 100+ Voices part of USDA NRCS' [Earth Team volunteer](#) network, but a step more advanced because they actively advocate on behalf of the soil. Their focus is amplifying the voices of farmers and ranchers who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences regarding managing their agricultural operation for healthier soil. Please enjoy each of the first 20 completed Voice profiles listed below or [download the combined set of Voices Profiles](#) (this PDF has all profiles combined into one set) at www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov, under "Soils," then "Soil Health."



Bryan Jorgensen
Ideal, SD

[Bryan Jorgensen; Ideal, SD](#)

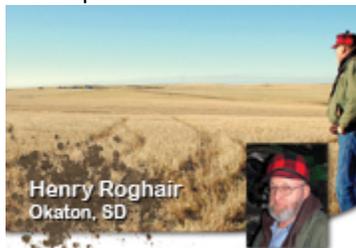
"Our goal is to pass this operation on to the next generation and beyond," said Bryan Jorgensen, who is a 3rd generation managing partner. "We're not fad followers. If something's not sustainable, I'm not going to do it."



Chad Kehn
Bonesteel, SD

[Chad Kehn; Bonesteel SD](#)

Chad Kehn, a 4th generation rancher, and his wife Cindy operate a diversified ranch in south central South Dakota near Bonesteel. With cattle the primary focus, his farming choices support livestock development.



Henry Roghair
Okaton, SD

[Henry Roghair; Okaton SD](#)

"Look at that," Henry says with a smile. Whether you're a backyard gardener or a big crop farmer, earthworms tend to mean one sure thing: healthy soil.



Paul Hetland
Mitchell, SD

[Paul Hetland; Mitchell SD](#)

Paul knows his crop production skills will be challenged each year as he searches for ways to ensure rainfall soaks into his soil profile and is there when crops need it.



Lawrence Woodward
Dupree, SD

[Lawrence Woodward; Dupree SD](#)

When the 1985 Farm Bill began requiring American farmers to maintain at least 20 percent cover on their crop land, Lawrence "Woody" Woodward made a decision. "I thought the easiest way to do that was to go no-till," he says. He's never looked back.



Mark Weinheimer
Pierre, SD

[Mark Weinheimer; Pierre SD](#)

Mark Weinheimer, a second generation farmer near Pierre, SD, read about cover crops for years. He knew benefits like reduced soil erosion and increased yield production sounded good. But, a farm tour in Burleigh County, North Dakota in 2009 made him act.



Steve Reimer
Chamberlain, SD

[Steve Reimer; Chamberlain SD](#)

"We started no-tilling 20 years ago because I knew we had to retain whatever moisture possible in our fields," Reimer said. "We had put in grass waterways and terraces, but erosion was still a concern. When it rained, all you could do was watch the muddy water run out of the fields and head to the dug-outs. We don't have those same problems now."



Weerts Family Farms

[Weerts Family Farms;](#)

[Kingsbury Co. SD](#) "Since we began leaving crop residue in the field and following our wheat with cover crops, we have seen increased organic matter and improved water infiltration," Steve says. "We're now working on managing excess water in some of our fields and finding ways to reduce compaction without using tillage."



David and Nancy Kruger
Twin Brooks, SD

[David Kruger; Twin Brooks SD](#)

Nestled in the slow rolling hills of Grant County, east of Twin Brooks, SD is the family farm owned and operated by David Kruger and his wife Nancy. David Kruger farms 1,700 acres of land with varying levels of soil capabilities.



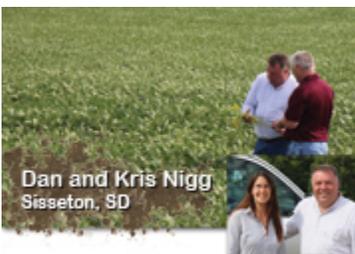
Johnson Farms
Frankfort, SD

[Johnson Farm; Frankfort SD](#)
Brian Johnson (left), with his children and father, Alan Johnson, farm near Frankfort, SD, in Spink County. It was Brian's father Alan who implemented use of no-till practices decades ago to help retain moisture during dry cycles. Together Brian and Alan have worked toward the best possible seed bed preparation and planting methods to manage crops during periods of greater moisture.



Troy Roth
Shannon County, SD

[Troy and Jackie Roth, Shannon County, SD](#) "We began no-till farming in 1987," Roth said. "Moving that direction was a necessity for soil health and production simply because of our area's limited moisture.



Dan and Kris Nigg
Sisseton, SD

[Dan and Kris Nigg, Sisseton, Roberts County, SD](#) "These days, advances in planters, row cleaners, and combine chaf spreaders, make the residue much more manageable," Nigg says. Nigg farms ground that's spread out over 15 miles and deals

with a variety of soil and moisture conditions.



Little Farm
Hamlin County, SD

[Barry Little Farm, Castlewood, SD](#) When you stopped on a bridge over the Big Sioux River in Hamlin County last fall and looked south you could see how Donnie, Barry and Eli Little intensively manage their cows and crops to increase profitability and to improve soil and water quality.



Bill Nelson
Lake County, SD

[Bill Nelson, Lake County, SD](#) A few in the area have started to ask Nelson to share how he's getting the excellent results he does. With his encouragement, they're following in his footsteps and have already made similar changes to improve the soil health on their farms.



Leitheiser Family Farm
Emery, SD

[Leitheiser Family, Emery, SD](#) Long term No-till and cover crops great for their Beef and Dairy Farm. George Leitheiser began no-tilling 30 years ago at the urging of his best friend, an Iowa no-tiller.



Al Miron
Crooks, SD

[Al Miron, Crooks SD](#) Miron and a neighbor farm 1,400 acres of cropland with a no-till farming system. The two own equipment together because it's an efficient and cost-effective way to plant and harvest their crops. No-till is one of the soil health management practices they use to improve the water holding capacity of their ground.



Bob Corio
Jefferson, SD

[Bob & Barb Corio, Jefferson, SD](#) Demand for fresh lamb from five-star restaurants drives Bob Corio's use of cover crops and better forages that provide feed but also build organic matter in the fields he farms in Union County, SD.



Erickson Family Farm
Marshall County, SD

[Erickson Family Farm, Langford, SD](#) The Ericksons added cover crops 10 years ago to help their no-till system handle heavy rains. "Our no-till fields can take, and keep, six inch rains that run off tilled fields," he says.



PROFILES IN
soil health

[Robert Nehl Farm, Corson County, SD](#) Nehl's Switch from Tillage to No-till and Cover Crops Nets Profits. The home in which Robert Nehl lives has been in his family since Woodrow Wilson was president. You'd have to go back even farther to find the roots of the Corson County land he farms today.



Brett Nix
Murdo, SD

[Brett Nix, Murdo, SD](#) To Brett Nix of rural Murdo, SD, sustainability is not enough. The progressive rancher believes rebuilding and regenerating the land is crucial in order for his family's operation to be relevant for the next generations.

To learn more, contact your local USDA NRCS office or contact the NRCS State Office at (605) 352-1200 or send an email to colette.kessler@sd.usda.gov.

Find more great stories at the **USDA NRCS national Soil Health Information Center** web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/soils/health/>.

Check back often for updates!

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