



A Standard Land Record for Farmers

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The use of a crop advisor has been on the increase, and many farms now use advisors. The amount of data available to evaluate crop production and soil health continues to grow as well.

Farmers who have committed to a good record keeping and planning process for several years will tell you that it pays for itself many times over, mostly in decreased fertilizer costs and improved yield. Those that have really embraced the process can speak about specific instances of positive change. Examples include improved overall yields from more managed rotations, unique seed choices that improve profitability and increased attention to harvest and storage factors.

Right now records systems come in all shapes and sizes, use a variety of metrics, and require several different software programs. How do we discover which land data is most useful?

At Dairy One, we would like to create a "land use page". This page would show soil type, crop, yield, soil test results, and a list of all the inputs applied on a field plot for a particular year. The goal would be to gather as many experts together as we can and coalesce all the useful field data onto one easy to read page.

By creating a familiar looking paper, much like a "cow card", we can create a recognizable way for farmers to improve their crops and their land. Farmers could use this page to compare themselves with others, creating an upward spiral of land productivity. Someday we could see land production records in Country Folks the same way we see milk production records.

Much the way a DHIA tester collects milk for analysis, a technician could collect soil and crop samples and get them to the lab and perform standardized tests like bunk density analysis, soil compaction analysis, etc. Consistently collected records would create a reliable data set that would be useful year over year.

A farmer friend of mine related a story in which one of his equipment operators was stopped in the field and told that he was spreading too much manure. The driver was able to pull out a notebook containing field records and show that he was following a professionally designed program that improved the farm's soil, water and crops. This conversation was quite useful for both the farm and the concerned neighbor.

A common record might be the best way to get us all on the same "land use page". Best practices would be more quickly identified and adapted.



Photo: ACS Agronomist Patty Ristow and ACS Environmental Planner Ryan Travers review field maps with Scott Bourcy, of Wood Farm in Clayton, NY. Field and crop records are the foundation for all the decisions farms and their advisors make.

- Current Field/Section
- Current Field/All Sections
- All Field/Sections
- All Field/Sections (Most Current lab)

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Field	Sect	GY	OM %	pH	CEC meq	% Ca Mg		P1	P2	% K	Ca	Mg	K	Ca:K	Ca:Mg
						Ca	Mg								
38B	1	2014	5.0	6.40					12		5018	510	164	30.60	9.84
38B	2	2014	5.0	6.40					12		5018	510	164	30.60	9.84
39A		2014	5.0	6.70					11		3632	452	163	22.28	8.04
39B	1	2014	4.8	6.70					3		4404	369	56	78.64	11.93
39B	2	2014	4.8	6.70					3		4404	369	56	78.64	11.93
40A	1	2016	3.31	6.60					7		3344	351	136	24.59	9.53
40A	2	2016	3.31	6.60					7		3344	351	136	24.59	9.53
40B	1	2014	4.5	6.60					2		3780	324	148	25.54	11.67
40B	2	2014	4.5	6.60					2		3780	324	148	25.54	11.67
41A		2015	2.7	6.40					13		2261	284	248	9.12	7.96
41B	1	2014	3.2	6.20					7		2497	2497	293	8.52	1.00
41B	2	2014	3.2	6.20					7		2497	256	293	8.52	9.75
42		2016	3.52	6.70					5		3641	352	59	61.71	10.34

Figure 1. Organized soil test results are an important part of any field and crop records system. This chart shows one preference for how to use soil tests with a Morgan (P2) extraction.

2016 | Fields -> Field History

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Field	Location	GY	Date	Oper Type	Product	Rate	Units	A.
10			2016 06/15/16	Manure	Milking Herd	5	Loads/Field	
11			2016 06/15/16	Manure	Milking Herd	16	Loads/Field	
13			2016 06/16/16	Manure	Milking Herd	12	Loads/Field	
13	North		2016 04/16/16	CP	Lumax	2	Qts/Acre	3.5
13	North		2016 04/16/16	Fert	08 N corn starter	160	Lbs/Acre	3.5
13	North		2016 04/16/16	Plant	Corn Silage	32000	Seeds/Acre	3.5
14			2016 04/16/16	CP	Lumax	2	Qts/Acre	0.4
14			2016 04/16/16	Fert	08 N P corn starter	80	Lbs/Acre	0.4
14			2016 04/16/16	Plant	Corn Silage	32000	Seeds/Acre	0.4

Figure 2. Being able to refer to manure, crop protection (CP), fertility (Fert), and planting history (Plant) is essential for good cropping.

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