



**SUCCESS YOU CAN
HANG YOUR HAT ON.**



JASPER COUNTY, INDIANA

A Case Study of Success

"The program is a process of discovery and learning. Farmers get to see what's going on in their fields with their management practices. They also get to see what's happening across the county landscape from other local farmers."

-Dan Perkins, Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
& INfield Advantage group leader

Jasper County farmers began participating in INfield Advantage in 2010, the first year for the program in Indiana. During that pilot season, 17 farmers conducted aerial imagery and guided stalk sampling trials on 39 fields across Jasper County. With this information, the participants were able to better understand their farms' data and adapt management practices accordingly.

Jasper County farmers continue to innovate and advance their farms through access to INfield Advantage tools and resources and through farmer-to-farmer shared learnings. This case study will provide you with insights from three Jasper County farmers and their county group leader regarding their participation in the INfield Advantage.

COLLECT – YOUR DATA

INfield Advantage provides you the opportunity to gather and analyze personalized, field-specific data.

Infield Trials — Corn Stalk Nitrate Testing

INfield Advantage provides farmers with timely, individualized data. A significant portion of this data is collected through guided corn stalk nitrate testing.

Guided corn stalk nitrate testing is completed prior to harvest, when the corn has reached black layer. Each county involved in INfield Advantage assesses their own local management practices.

The INfield Advantage program coordinator — using field aerial images — pre-selects points within each field that represents different management practices, varying soil types or unique features within that field. At each selected point, ten 8-inch long

stalk samples are taken six inches from the ground. These samples are placed into a sample bag corresponding to that point in the field.

Each bag is then taken to a laboratory where the stalks are tested for the leftover nitrate level in each stalk.

If the stalk's nitrate level is high, it's possible too much nitrogen was applied to this portion of the field and could represent the field as a whole. The lower the level of nitrates in the sample, the greater the optimization of nitrogen achieved. With nitrogen, there are many variables, such as weather, stress and soil type, that can affect the amount of leftover nitrate in the corn stalks.

UNDERSTAND – YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Through peer-to-peer group discussion and local aggregated results, INfield Advantage's tools help you understand and evaluate unbiased, individualized data.

Every farm has their own set of best management practices — no one practice is ideal for all environments. Being able to share data and discuss ideas with farmers within your own county allows participants to understand and learn more about what's happening in their own fields.



Infield Tools — A Look from Above

For Jasper County participants, aerial imagery has been an invaluable INfield Advantage tool. Aerial imagery has revealed areas for improvement including, soil compaction and unrecognized application equipment problems.

This above-the-field perspective can pinpoint issues down to a single row. Using imagery in conjunction with soil survey information, guided stalk test data, and yield data and maps can help create a more complete picture of what's happening across the landscape of a farmer's fields.

Jason Abbring, a Jasper County farmer and INfield Advantage participant, was surprised at what he found after his first crop year being involved in the program. "Aerial imagery revealed that our anhydrous equipment was not applying nitrogen evenly to the fields. After having a more in-depth discussion about our operation during the winter meeting, we went back to the farm and fixed the equipment issue." Jason also learned that with his sandy soils, side-dressing rather than a pre-planting application is the preferred method to avoid leaching.

OPTIMIZE — YOUR BOTTOM LINE

Make more informed decisions by utilizing INfield Advantage insights to compare and implement management opportunities that optimize inputs and improve profits.

"The program is a way to evaluate your own practices, try new management strategies and gather valuable information from other producers — upon which you can make better decisions." - Dave Rodibaugh, Jasper County INfield Advantage participant

Because of his participation in INfield Advantage, Bruce Waibel has made variable rate application a common practice on his farm. His data revealed an opportunity to optimize nitrogen usage in their fields. They have increased yield by as much as one bushel on as little as 0.7 pounds of nitrogen — well below the standard of 1.2 pounds. "The challenge is to learn what is the best level of nitrogen and where do we want to end up. We were putting too much nitrogen on and it was moving off-site. We needed to reduce that."

BENEFIT — YOUR FUTURE

Proactive input management leads to improved soil health and water quality. Your decisions today impact your tomorrow.

"The program is an opportunity for us, as producers, to take a proactive step and learn more about the effects we have on the environment and how those effects can impact our bottom line." - Bruce Waibel, Jasper County INfield Advantage participant

Dan Perkins recognized a few differences in the way his program participants approached planting season. Farmers who were already implementing variable rates on their farms had fairly progressive conservation practices to begin with, but when those same farmers were encouraged to share their management practices with other local farmers at small group meetings, they began to understand a bigger picture. "They get to interact and realize, 'oh this guy is trying this practice and maybe I should try to do that, too.' There is obviously a yield advantage or they are utilizing nitrogen more efficiently and that peer-to-peer influencing occurs."

Jasper County farmers were able to discuss their insights for the year with other farmers who had similar experiences and change what they were doing on their farms to take steps towards nitrogen optimization for the next year.

As a result of participation in INfield Advantage, participants in Jasper County continue to:

- Implement new management practices
- Gather information regarding their own fields, along with other local farmers' fields
- Experiment with different conservation practices including no-till and cover crops
- Optimize nitrogen usage, increasing their bottom line and benefiting Indiana's natural resources

Crop nutrients, especially nitrogen, are a costly part of farming. For farmers, it remains important to optimize inputs and keep farms economically viable while benefiting the environment for future generations.



Infield Advantage is a proactive, collaborative opportunity for farmers to collect and understand personalized, on-farm data to optimize their management practices to, ultimately, improve their bottom line and benefit the environment.

LEARN MORE ABOUT INFIELD ADVANTAGE AT WWW.INFIELDADVANTAGE.ORG.

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Infield Advantage is brought to you by:

Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Purdue Extension and the Indiana Conservation Partnership.

This communication funded with Indiana soybean and corn checkoff dollars.