


FARMERS
PRIVATE SECTOR
PUBLIC SECTOR
On familiarity with conservation practices:

Most were **familiar with a wide array of practices**; many had **firsthand experiences**.

Foundational familiarity with popular conservation practices. Noted **an uptick in hearing about them** in recent years.

Varying levels of technical familiarity, but **strong familiarity with who in the county to direct people towards** for the best answer.

On benefits of conservation practices:

Cover crops lead to **increased N**, greater **organic matter**, **weed control**, and **stability in soil**.

Healthier crops, **fewer inputs**, and **lower costs** overtime.

More working days become possible on the farm.

"Manure odor is the smell of money."

Neighbors influencing neighbors.

Increased yield, over time.

Farmers are more willing to use **manure over commercial fertilizers** than even a few years ago.

An economy is developing.

Cover crop sign-ups are up, recently. This is especially true given the interest from livestock farms in cover crop byproduct as feed for their animals.

Farmers have an **entrepreneurial spirit**. As results begin to show, they will innovate.

On challenges and barriers to conservation practices:

Cover crops **less predictable and consistent**. Learning curve involved.

Conservation **perceived as an all-or-nothing** endeavor.

Terminating cover crops is complicated.

Cover crops might lead to **shorter growing period**, and the **inability to transition soil quick enough** for the next growing season.

Taking the leap into trying conservation practices is uncertain.

There is a resistance to change. **Farmers are independent.**

Expenses are a moving target.

On your role in farming and conservation:

Farmers. Business owners. **Leaders of a successful movement**, if there will be one.

Educate, network, and **provide technology and services** to farmers.

Top-down education, and **ground-up storytelling**.

On the role of government:

Resistance to incentives; want to farm because it's profitable; **want to sell what's grown.**

Farmers want to build something **self-sustaining**, and that **doesn't require government subsidies.**

Conservation efforts are short-staffed. USDA NRCS has diminished over last 10 years.

Farmers want **reliable markets and steady profits.**

On changing weather:

Erosion and drought noticeable indicators and driving factors.

Crop diversity helps with resilience, and **seed technology doesn't get enough credit.**

Rain cycles are shifting back, leading to **late summer droughts**, and thus **a different calendar than in the past.**

Seed and equipment technology have made this navigable.

Drought stands out as the primary climate foresight being reckoned with. **Seed tech development, fertilizing technology, and an openness to new technologies** all lead to optimism.

On Wayne County:

Variety in farmer type in the focus group is representative of the **vast Wayne County network**. There is **potential for conservation collaboration** in the area, and **potential for farmer-led movement.**

Diversity of farm types in county; potential for a circular economy due to **livestock and crop farms**, and **high concentration of equipment and technology vendors.**

"We're spoiled here."

Soil and topographical diversity from property-to-property (or acre-to-acre) mean **more than one strategy is needed.**

Multi-generational farmers with **rooted practice and tradition.**

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