



FARMERS

PRIVATE SECTOR

PUBLIC SECTOR

On familiarity with conservation practices:

Firsthand familiarity with **grazing, cover crops, sod-middles** and **pollinator strips** in particular.

Familiarity both **on their own farms** and **serving others**. Notably, **cover crops, variable rate fertilizer**, and **terracing**.

Familiarity with **farmers using reduced tillage and no-till practices**, since 1980s.

Cover crops, crop rotation and diversification are noted primary practices.

On benefits of conservation practices:

Less erosion, as a result of practice changes like **cover crops, drainage tiles**, and **no-till**.

Early corn planting may be empowered by **cover crops**.

Moisture retention regulates **soil temperature**.

Manure increases **organic matter**.

New **technological advantages** - such as **virtual fencing** - continue to arise.

Cover crops turned to **hay** presents a **market opportunity**.

Cover crops **improve soil health while providing a valuable grazing resource** for livestock.

Advanced nutrient management **reduces the need for commercial fertilizers**.

Significant operational savings: reduced fuel costs and less equipment hours.

More resilient systems.

On challenges and barriers to conservation practices:

Land prices and growth driving a **focus towards cash grains**.

Diminishing role of livestock: **Cheaper to sell cattle** than to feed them.

Diversifying crops for soil health **is challenging** when the **processing infrastructure** and **local markets only** support a few specific crops.

Mismatch: Agribusiness incentives are to **sell more**; conservation is about **using less**.

Conservation practices have long term benefits, but **current land prices demand instant results**.

Social pressures for higher yield and clean fields can be a deterrent.

Technologies are expensive to implement.

Conservation incentive calendars are not always consistent with best practices. Weather has changed, but policy may have not.

Tight profit margins make the risk of failure a deterrent.

Short-term, one year land leases prevent tenants from committing to long-run conservation practices.

Complexity of transitioning to new systems can be overwhelming.

Ensuring **public sector information** reaches farmers.

On the role of government:

Labor requirements (e.g., wages, housing) are challenging for labor intensive crops (e.g., vegetables and fruit). Current markets favor soybeans, corn, and wheat. Figuring out how to reach younger demographics is a key consideration.	"Simplification of the implementation." Policy is too complicated for even professionals to understand. Programs haven't shifted with the climate-altered calendar. Public sector understaffed; and often focuses on cities.	Administrative burden of programs. Strong desire for streamlined, 'one application' systems: using shared terminology. Officials should meet farmers in the field, rather than office.
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On changing weather:

Highly unpredictable weather is decimating certain crops, particularly fruits. Wind and drought having negative impacts.	The water table is very low, and moisture in the soil is suffering. Wind is intensifying.	Severe drought or intense flooding, with little middle ground. Unpredictable rains: Fewer events, but higher intensity. Wind causes issues with crops, blowing debris.
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On Lafayette County:

Soil variability is a strength, but can also be a challenge in the Southern regions of the county with higher clay content. Processing infrastructure in the area is only set up to handle soybean, corn, and wheat.	Missouri is a transition state: Conservation recommendations need to be nuanced, varied. Not enough communication on conservation resources. Seed breeding seems more focused on other parts of the country, despite companies like Bayer in St. Louis.	Strict planning and zoning uniquely protect agriculture. Shortage of technical staff, local NRCS personnel. Proximity to Kansas City creates development pressures. Focus on urban rather than rural residents.
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