

Grower Files

Russ and Sue Torkelson, *Monticello, Wis.*



Varied ground gets productive boost

Russ Torkelson has used FS products for the past 30 years to help him with his corn, hay and cattle operation that he runs with his wife, Sue. They raise a 50-50 mix of corn and hay on 800 acres near Monticello, Wis. The rolling country is suited to dryland corn and alfalfa, but the land also offers its challenges.

"We have a lot of different soil types around here," says Frontier FS Cooperative Crop Specialist Ben Huber. "Growers are looking for consistency of performance across fields with as many as 15 different soil types. The hybrids also need to be able to handle different types of stresses in one year. This year, we were very wet early and have been dry the last month."

That's where Huber's expertise comes in handy for the Torkelsons. "Ben sits down in the fall with us and recommends what [FS Seed] hybrids to use in certain fields," says Russ. "With the type of land we have, we fertilize for 160 to 170 bushels per acre of corn, but usually end up with an average of about 150. With the different types of soils, we have some years where we hit on one type and miss on another.

"FS also does our spraying and fertilizer for corn and hay, and their field men do our scouting for alfalfa. FS has always kept quality and knowledgeable people that I have felt confident working with," Russ adds.

Besides their hay and corn operation, the Torkelsons also finish beef cattle and Holstein steers. "FS did a comprehensive management plan several years ago because [our livestock produces] a lot of manure. It's a big concern for me on where to spread it. They helped us use our manure better, so we don't need as much fertilizer," says Russ.

Another thing he likes is the co-op's Agri-Finance program. "We buy our inputs in the late fall because the cash discounts are biggest at the end of the year. We get the cash discount and the low interest rate, so it works good for us," says Russ. "It's a big part of farming anymore."