

## Sustainable is Not Enough

At the recent No-Till on the Plains conference in Salina, Kansas, the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture addressed past, current and future issues facing agriculture. His comments helped me to define some thoughts I have about where we are today and our challenges for the future. It is not about sustaining our operations. Sustainable is not enough in our current situation and certainly not enough as we look to the challenges and opportunities in the future. We should adopt a mission of Enhancing Our World.

We have been about Enhancing productivity per acre and per labor input for some time. This is only going to be a continuing part of our management goals. Enhancing not only the amount of grain or livestock we product, but also the quality of those products. We need to Enhance our ability to do this with less energy and with the use of more diverse resources. An example of this is our response to the unintended consequences of ethanol development in the state. Corn has been a basis for our livestock business. It appears possible that feed costs for beef operations could be impacted by 15 to 20% increases, swine by 20-25% increases and poultry by 25-30% increases. Efficiency of operation in using this more precious feed resource is going to be necessary. We can't go back to yearling cattle in grass pastures for numerous reasons. We can go forward to quality forages, rotational grazing and achieving cattle performance in a forage based diet to 1000-1100 pounds before finishing in the feedlot for a shortened 80-90 days.

Another example is the falsify of a "yeah but" syndrome in setting our productivity goals for the future. A number of noted scientists at universities have set potential yields goals for crop production limits numerous times in the past. These perceived limitations are no more accurate today than they were 50 or a hundred years ago. New technology, new ideas, and a sense that we are not even close to any limit are needed more today than ever before. We are still in our infancy on possibilities and there are more new frontiers than when the European Americans settled this land.

Our care of the land, water and wildlife environmental resources should also focus on an Enhancing what we have rather than a sustaining mode. We have lots of opportunities to enhance productivity and improve our environmental health at the same time. We have nearly limitless opportunities to enhance quality of our water resources, improve fish habitat, improve hunting resources, improve tree and forest development for shelter, recreation and forest production. We just need to dream about the opportunity to Enhance our world rather than focusing on what once was or what might have been. We should not set a standard for resource development until we know what the limitations are, and in our world the opportunity to Enhance is so huge it becomes a standard in itself.

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