

Ben Wagner

Ben operates a 300-acre certified organic farm in Douglas County. He has been a certified organic producer since the mid-1990's. He also has a 35-head organic dairy herd which he is in the process of selling to a young, local beginning farmer. Ben is working closely with the young farmer, mentoring him to establish a successful dairy operation. Ben uses a 7-year rotation of corn-sorghum/sudan grass-corn-oats-alfalfa/grass hay (3 years) on all cropland acres. The sorghum/sudan grass is a multi-purpose crop providing weed control after corn and providing a source of forage for the cattle. About 50% of the corn acreage is chopped for silage and the balance picked for ear corn both used as feed for the cow herd. The pasture is set up as a rotational paddock design developed in cooperation with NRCS. The rotational grazing plan works to effectively promote pasture health and

feed values. Manure is the primary source of nutrients applied for crops. Regular nutrient testing of manure resources performed by his crop consultant help guide Ben in making accurate applications of nutrients for crops. Appropriate nutrient credits are given to previous alfalfa crops and 2nd year manure benefits. No insecticides are used on the farm to control pests. Wetland areas are buffered with grass borders. He plans on continuing his practice of evaluating different practices that improve weed control, animal and soil health.

