

# CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS (CIG) BEGINNING FARMER CASE STUDY

Eric Thalken

“ When you farm with diversity and biology in mind, conservation falls into place. ”



## ERIC'S STORY



### Currently...

Has been farming for around 10 years. Today, Eric works on his wife's extended family's farm near Dorchester, Nebraska, where he manages over 2,000 acres of irrigated farmland, producing corn, yellow peas, soybeans, and forages.

## CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The entire farm is strategically cover cropped and may host as many as 1,000 head of custom-grazed cattle per year.

Cover cropping in this fashion produces as much as **85 percent** of the farm's nitrogen fertility in addition to providing a major weed control benefit.



## CONSERVATION PRACTICES, CONTINUED

“ The book ‘The Biological Farmer’ by Gary Zimmer made sense to me. I emailed Gary, and that turned into me moving to his farm to work and gain experience. People passionate about agriculture from around the world visited this farm, and I got to be one of them. ”



Also read Acres USA, a publication focused on organic, sustainable, and out-of-the box farming, which helped shape his mindset around the connectedness of farming and human and ecological well-being.

“ The major focus of my crop management is manipulating soluble carbon to soluble nitrogen ratios, both above and within the soil environment. This is performed by cover crop variety and mix selection, grazing management, both on- and off-farm manure applications and timing, and method of cover crop termination. ”

## ADVICE FOR BEGINNING FARMERS



Suggests connecting with other farmers. Eric meets with 15 to 20 farmers informally, and is part of an online forum for farmers called AgTalk.

“ Make yourself a valuable asset to somebody. Older farmers are looking for an exit, and if you can prove your skills to them and learn from them over a few years, you will likely face greater success and more opportunity in farming. ”



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CENTER for RURAL AFFAIRS

CFRA.ORG

| INFO@CFRA.ORG

| 402.687.2100

