



Dwayne Proctor

Dwayne Proctor, of Durand, IL, is the second generation on his family farm. One of his three children, Brett, is the third generation and as they plan to progress their farm, they are focused on building their legacy.

“We look to expand where we can justify it,” said Proctor.

Upon graduating from Illinois State University with a degree in General Agriculture and a minor in Biology, Proctor joined the Army Reserve. While his active service only lasted 6 months, he was involved for 6 years. Successively, he then worked for Northrup King and Company, a seed business with a sales territory in Northern Illinois. He was then relocated to cover Ohio and Michigan. He and his family moved to Lima, Ohio. After a merger with what is now Syngenta, he came back home to Durand.



Dwayne Proctor (L) and son, Brett Proctor (R), in front of their grain storage system.

It is here where he, his wife, and three children engaged fully in the family farm. He began renting land from his father as well as a few other acres. When an opportunity came up to buy a farm, the expansion process began.

“The next step was to go into partnership with my son, Brett,” said Proctor, “and it’s one of the better things I have ever done.”

Today, the farm is equipped with grain storage, in several locations, and drying facilities as well as a 45 head herd of Red Angus and Simmental beef cattle. They farm approximately 1250 acres of row crops including corn and soybeans and 75-80 acres are in a Conservation Reserve Program.

The beef cattle are used for breeding and market. Proctor tells that he keeps back a few heifers every year as replacements and a few steers to feed out and sell to the locker plant. Most of his feeder calves go to a sale barn in Monroe, Wisconsin if they are not sold through a private transaction.

Aside from his time spent on the farm, Proctor devotes time to various agriculture based organizations including 28 years on the Soil and Water Conservation district. He was also a representative for his Conservation district. "We are kind of in a transition between urban and rural," said Proctor. East of his place is all urban, and so it was a bit of a challenge to get the urban needs into the association. Despite the challenges, Proctor succeeded. He has also spent time on the Farm Bureau Board of Directors and the Winnebago County 4-H Show Board. He even devoted time to the Livestock, Fur and Feathers sale at the county fair.

"I felt it was time to move aside," said Proctor, "and let some others move in." He has resigned from the Soil and Water Board and Farm Bureau Board.

His time spent with these organizations led him to really believe in the ideas of conservation. "Minimum till, put the plow away and zero till, put the chisel away," said Proctor. "Now we are moving into experimenting more with cover crops."

Besides conforming to a new conservation-aware way of farming, Proctor has also experienced a new wave of technology moving onto the farm. "If I wasn't in partnership with my son, I probably wouldn't be as involved with the newer technology," said Proctor. "But, what I am finding out is that it is great to be in and using it. The hard part is remembering how to work it, but I know that Brett is only a phone call away."

Their tractors are equipped with auto-steer operated by a GPS, yield monitors, and variable rate application technology for soil sampling.

When it comes down to it, Proctor sees the reality of today's farmers. "Those that are expanding are probably going to survive fine," said Proctor. "Those of the older generation, those not willing to put any more into their businesses are on their way out. That's just the way it works." Proctor believes that the partnership he has with his son means that they are going to survive because of the extra generation that will keep it moving forward.

As I wrapped up my conversation with Mr. Proctor, I asked him what one message he would like to convey to consumers. Instead, he counteracted that request and offered some advice to producers.

"With the advent of immediate knowledge, everyone is out there putting out information that the consumers are hearing," said Proctor. "A lot of time it's not good stuff that they believe. We, as farmers have not done a good enough job telling our story."

I am thankful to Proctor and all of the farmers who are willing to share their stories with me and the public. It is important to understand not only where your food comes from, but who is producing it and how they do it. It is also important to go straight to the source: the farmer.
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