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## Recap of 2023

When we look back on rainfall records from this year, we will automatically think, “Wow, yields must have been amazing with all of that rain.” 2023 will definitely have an (\*) by it to remember that it wasn't all “good rain.” Total rainfall for the year came to 18.97,” with 14.29” falling between May 1 and July 6!

The calendar year started off with below normal precipitation. The Morton County wheat crop that was dusted in during the previous fall remained sitting in dry soil all winter. Most of the wheat never emerged, and the crop was eventually zeroed out in April. We ended up not harvesting a single acre of dryland wheat on the entire farm this summer. In early May, we caught a 1” rain that allowed us an opportunity to plant some dryland corn. With no sub soil moisture in place, the crop was planted on a hope and a prayer. We continued to receive timely rain in Morton County that helped sustain the dryland corn, and the crop looked amazing until July. At one point in early July, we thought we could have a record dryland corn crop, but the second half of the summer switched to a very dry, hot weather pattern that robbed several bushels of yield potential. Our dryland milo was planted in early June, and it got off to a great start and looked excellent as well. Unfortunately, the milo crop had to endure the same dry, hot environment as the corn and struggled to thrive. We feel fortunate that we were still able to harvest some decent fall crops in Morton County, despite the ups and downs.

The irrigated crops back in Seward County were planted into dry soils much like the crops in Morton County. When the early May rain fell, we were able to get crops off to a good start. With the warm, moist soil in place, we had one of the best stands of cotton in recent memory. It looked almost too good to be true. Sure enough, in early June, the weather pattern became much more active with round after round of heavy rain accompanied by several wind and hail events. By mid June, all of our cotton was completely destroyed. The wind and hail in June and early July also took a toll on the corn and soybeans. With every storm that rolled through, the crops in Seward county got beat up and suffered damage. We were fortunate to not have devastating wind or hail that shredded the corn to the ground, but we sustained enough damage to hurt yields significantly. Some fields had yields reduced by 50%.

The soybean crop was similar to the corn crop in being below average. The soybeans got off to a sluggish start with the cool, wet June. The driving winds and pounding hail forced the soybeans to yield below average this year.

## Continued

Looking forward to 2024, we are very excited to have a great stand of winter wheat on all of our dryland acres. It's been 3 years since we've had a stand of wheat in Morton County. The crop looks excellent and would welcome a ton of snow this winter! Seeing lush, beautiful wheat in the fields going into winter is a great feeling.

Our family has so many blessings to be thankful for this year. We are grateful to wake up everyday and work in an industry that we love. We have a phenomenal crew of employees and a strong supportive family that play a vital roll in making every year a success. We hope that you and yours have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## A Shift in Acreage

As mentioned in the front page of the newsletter, this year's cotton crop was completely wiped out by hail and wind. The loss of the crop, along with the low cotton prices, forced us to make some tough decisions for the upcoming year. This fall, we shifted a lot of our cotton acres back to winter wheat. Several factors went into this decision, but in the end, it came down to agronomics and economics.

For years, cotton has been a great rotational crop for corn on our shared water or limited allocation wells. Cotton is extremely drought tolerant, which often lets us continue to water our irrigated corn throughout the summer, while the cotton is able to tap into deep soil moisture and tolerate the dry, hot weather. Our growing season is short for what traditional cotton is accustomed to, so we must induce plant stress to force maturity, using growth regulators and/or limiting irrigation as the cotton bolls mature. The longer term downside is that after cotton is harvested, the soil profile is left depleted, leaving conditions extremely dry for the next crop. On some years, cotton harvest would roll well into November, leaving very few warm days to apply pre-water irrigation for the next year's crop. During the dry winters we have experienced the last few years, we have struggled to refill the soil profile adequately before planting the next corn crop.

Due to the struggles of managing soil moisture and the low cotton prices, we are shifting our cotton acres back to winter wheat. Winter wheat prices and yield potential aren't necessarily a home run for profit due to the challenges wheat faces with late spring freezes, diseases, hail and price. However, growing wheat does allow for more beneficial residue and a longer period of fallow, which provide a yield boost for the next corn crop. Our plan is to harvest the wheat with our stripper heads to leave more residue on the soil, which will conserve moisture received after harvest. The stripper stubble left after harvest in late June will shade the soil and help hold moisture received while the land sits fallow until corn is planted the next spring. Cotton has served our farm well, and in some years was a huge success. Other years, however, it was not. Cotton may not be gone forever for us, and wheat may not always be the answer, but as Tracy Lawrence sings "the only thing that stays the same is everything changes."

## Stan Honored for 40 years of Service

In early December, Dr. Brian Jordan, President of the Kansas School Board Association recognized Stan for his time serving on the USD 483 Board of Education. Stan was elected to the Southwestern Heights Board of Education in July of 1983 and served for 40 consecutive years. In 1986, he was elected President of the



Board and served 37 of the 40 years in that capacity. Stan graduated from Southwestern Heights in 1968 and returned from college to teach there for 3 years. After a short career in education, Stan returned to the farm full time and later ran for the School Board opening in 1983. His understanding of education, passion for students, and support of educators made him an ideal board member. In a recent interview, Stan said the reason he served for so long was because of his love for students and desire to support educators responsible for their learning. Stan has been a pillar for our school district and community for many years, impacting thousands of students. We feel blessed to call this man a father, husband, and mentor, and are thankful for the years of leadership he has provided our family and farm. Congratulations, Stan, on such a wonderful tenure in selfless service to our school system.

## Wedding Bells

This May, we had the honor of hosting a wedding reception for Clint's daughter, Jayde. Caleb and Jayde Tanner were married in Kismet on May 27th, and the reception was held at the farm. The entire crew and several family members pitched in to transform the farm shop into a wedding reception venue. Jayde and Caleb live nearby and enjoy hunting and traveling together. We had a wonderful time celebrating Jayde and Caleb and wish them many years of love and happiness.



In January, two of our employees will be getting married back home in South Africa! Marty, who has been with us for 5 years, met Caty through a mutual friend while Caty was living and working in Dallas. Caty came to work for us this summer, and both Marty and Caty plan on returning next season as a married couple to work on the farm. They are both eager, joyful people and are sure to have years of adventure ahead of them. Congratulations and best wishes Marty and Caty!





