





# FROM THE GROUND UP

VOLUME 8: ISSUE 1 SPRING 2020



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# FROM THE GROUND UP

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# CARING FOR OUR EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS DURING THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

**A**t Midwestern BioAg, our top priority is the health and safety of our employees, customers and vendors. Due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak among other challenges, we recognize and understand that there is nothing about the 2020 season shaping up to be business as usual for anyone, particularly our customers.

Despite all the uncertainties of today, the Midwestern BioAg team remains committed to doing our best. That said, COVID-19 has changed some aspects of how we operate, at least for the time being. While our locations remain open for business, we have implemented various precautionary measures and strict protocols intended to keep our customers and employees safe. These measures includes limiting in-person interaction where possible; asking employees

to work from home, for those that can do so; and for those making deliveries and working in our facilities daily, they are doing so with the utmost care. Ultimately, we strive to keep providing the best service possible while keeping health and safety at the forefront.

As you need to reach us for your on-going needs this season, please do not hesitate to call your local MBA facility or sales consultant.

And more than ever, on behalf of the entire Midwestern BioAg team, we wish you a safe, healthy, successful 2020 season.

All the best,  
Sue Gullickson, President and CFO

## BRAD OELMANN JOINS MIDWESTERN BIOAG TEAM AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**W**e are proud to announce Brad Oelmann has joined the Midwestern BioAg team as CEO, focused on the expansion of TerraNu across key US markets.

"I am delighted to join the Midwestern BioAg team," said Oelmann. "In my 30 years of experience, TerraNu is the first crop nutrient product that I've witnessed deliver such consistent crop performance, increased nutrient uptake and maximum nutrient distribution, all while enhancing the soil health. As we grow TerraNu's distribution across the country, I'm excited for an increasing grower audience to experience TerraNu's industry-leading and unrivaled performance results for themselves."

A farm kid from Ackley, Iowa, Brad grew up on a corn & soybean row crop farm that also had a farrow to finish hog operation. He currently resides in central Iowa with his wife Connie and two children Shelby and Nick.

When asked what drew him to Midwestern BioAg, Oelmann responded, "There is nothing more fulfilling than connecting what you do every day to a bigger purpose and mission you believe in. As a recognized leader in soil health and sustainable practices, Midwestern BioAg continues to be at the forefront of regenerative agriculture and the interest that surrounds it. While the general ag industry is lagging, the interest and movement to become more proactive around soil health is there and MBA is in a great position to continue leading the way. Through our TerraNu efforts, we are able to deliver some of the greatest soil health tools to growers that extend well beyond our MBA retail footprint."

As we look upon the 2020 growing season, Oelmann recognizes the challenging market environment - continued trade and tariff issues, commodity price uncertainty and the unknowns of COVID-19,

but "with MBA's proven approach and the proprietary products we offer, we are well positioned to support industry growth in key areas such as increased consumer demand for organics and overall demand to support continued population growth."

Oelmann joins the team after most recently serving as Commercial Director of North America for Albaugh where he oversaw the U.S. crop protection, seed treatment, specialty and Canada commercial teams. Prior to Albaugh, Oelmann's executive leadership experience includes Chief Operating Officer for Land O'Lakes Services, CEO for United Suppliers Inc., and CEO for Aligned Ag Distributors. Oelmann holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Ag Business from Iowa State University.

Welcome to the team, Brad! ●



Pictured (left to right): Shelby, Brad, Connie, & Nick Oelmann.

# CONSISTENCY IS KEY

By: Duane Siegenthaler, VP of Strategic Sales

***“It’s not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives.  
It’s what we do consistently.”  
- Anthony Robbins***

Let’s take a moment and consider a situation. Do you remember the first time you tried shooting a basketball? We are shown how to shoot a basketball at a very young age. Things aren’t easy at first, though - we practiced and practiced the corrected movement and angle but still, it was hard to achieve our goal of making it in. But with persistence throughout many days, months and years practicing our technique, we started shooting more baskets.

The results become more consistent over time due to our muscle memory and understanding what works and doesn’t work for us as we practiced. We learned from our errors and mistakes and adjusted as we went.

Now, years later, shooting a basketball is second nature (for some of us), and its all because we stayed committed and consistent in practicing to shoot the ball. Even when we faced illness or injury and maybe had to sit out a few times, that was only temporary, and we got right back to practicing as soon as we healed up.

It’s no secret last year was one of the toughest growing seasons in a very long time for farmers across the Midwest. Because of the weather, many farmers were forced to put their fields into prevent plant acres for the year, were unable to give their soil and crops the proper nutrition and were left wondering what the results would be.

As we go into this year, some forecasters are projecting yet another weather issue of drought. Some farmers may already be thinking about how they are going to survive yet another difficult season. However, staying committed and consistent to your MBA program and overall goal is key.

Many acres did not get planted last year, but we stayed committed and consistent to our philosophy at MBA that our products and services work to minimize weather and other environmental effects, at the same time feeding your soil and keeping it healthy. Don’t let weather impact your belief in the MBA program and its effectiveness. We will always be here to help you weather the storm.

I encourage you to think about your overarching goals for your farm. Once you figure that out, think about the practices and steps you can take in the long term to achieve that goal and keep achieving it. Weather is never consistent, but you can be. We may face years of difficult weather, but we can’t control that. What we can control is sticking to our beliefs and regular practices, making adjustments to our errors and mistakes along the way, just like we did as we learned how to shoot a basketball.

Consistent practices yield consistent results. Don’t let the things you can’t control affect your consistency and commitment to your farm. ●



# BIO-CAL SPRING APPLICATION: Q&A WITH FIRMAN HERSHBERGER

**Firman Hershberger is a BioAg consultant in southeast Iowa that has been recommending BioAg's premier soil calcium amendment product, Bio-Cal, to his customers for over 20 years. He generally recommends Bio-Cal be applied in the fall, but given last year's wet fall, not everyone was able to find a window of good soil conditions for application. We sat down with Firman and got his recommendations on applying Bio-Cal in the spring.**

## **When do you recommend Bio-Cal be applied?**

*I prefer Bio-Cal to be applied in fall because it's usually easier to find a time to apply it. Bio-Cal will last in the soil until spring so fall application usually works well with both soil conditions and with the farmer's schedule. But there are always some cases where it doesn't get applied in fall, and when that happens, Bio-Cal can go on in spring. It works just as well if applied in the spring as it does in the fall - it's just usually better timing for the farmer to apply in fall.*

## **What are some of the benefits of a spring Bio-Cal application?**

*Bio-Cal provides the same great benefits for the soil and crops whether it's applied in the spring or the fall. My team has been out applying Bio-Cal already this spring, and it's great for improving soil quality. Bio-Cal is also really beneficial for making soil nutrients more available. I have one customer who was initially pretty skeptical about using Bio-Cal because he didn't think he needed any calcium. But he decided to try Bio-Cal because he had a potassium deficiency in his crops that nothing seemed to fix. I told him Bio-Cal is great for making more nutrients available to the crop, so he agreed to give it a try - and was amazed by the results. For the first time in a long time, he got potassium uptake into his crop and was really impressed that adding a product that contains no potassium could make potassium more available. But that's how Bio-Cal works, it kicks loose nutrients in the soil to make them plant-available.*

## **What rate do you think works best?**

*I usually recommend 750 to 1000 lbs/acre, but it depends on how heavy the soil is. On a really light soil I recommend 500 lbs/acre because the soil can't hold as many nutrients, and on heavier soil I recommend up to 1,000 lbs/acre.*

## **What crops or crop systems does Bio-Cal work best with?**

*My first preference is to apply on hay ground, but I also highly recommend Bio-Cal for corn ground. Bio-Cal produces uniform fields with a nice dark color and faster growth. This is great for growing high quality forage crops that feed really well. When you apply Bio-Cal on a corn field you can see exactly where it went down when the corn is canopied because those fields will be all the same height and dark green. Those uniform, dark green fields are always going to be the top yielding ones.*

*I also like to recommend Bio-Cal for corn on corn years, or after manure, especially when a lot was applied. Bio-Cal balances the soil and keeps it healthy after a large application of hog manure. One farmer I work with applied Bio-Cal on a field that got no other P or K fertilizer, and he got really good crop uptake of those nutrients. That's because Bio-Cal stimulates soil biology which gets more nutrients cycling. That's why sometimes if the farmers are in a crunch, I will recommend putting on nitrogen and 1,000 lbs/acre of Bio-Cal and skipping P and K. A farmer could do that for a couple of years to get through a budget crunch. You can't do that for the long term, but it can work in a pinch.*

*I like to recommend Bio-Cal ahead of beans when there's a potassium deficiency. If potassium levels are low and the farmer has been adding potassium but not getting a crop response, then I recommend applying 1,000 lbs/acre of Bio-Cal. It will take care of the potassium deficiency because it stimulates the uptake of potassium from the soil.*

*Midwestern BioAg has been seeing results from Bio-Cal application for over 25 years. It is an effective, versatile product that can be applied in spring or fall that will help improve your soil quality and plant uptake of nutrients. Call your Midwestern BioAg representative to learn more.●*

## 2019 FRED KURSCHNER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



Feb. 2020 - Noelle Elfering accepts the scholarship award from MBA of Blue Mounds General Manager Duane Kleve.

**W**e would like to congratulate the winner of the 2019 Fred Kurschner Memorial Scholarship, Noelle Elfering! Noelle is currently pursuing an Associate of Science degree at Southwest Technical College in Fennimore, WI. Originally from Barneveld, WI, Noelle grew up on a sheep and cattle farm and was involved in 4-H and Skills USA and had the opportunity to compete at the Skills USA nationals twice. She plans to transfer to UW-Platteville next spring to obtain a bachelor's degree in Agriculture & Technology Education.

Congratulations, Noelle - we wish you the best! •

## FROM THE DESK OF GARY ZIMMER

Regenerative Agriculture? It's Nothing New.

**T**here is a lot of talk right now about Regenerative Agriculture, cover crops and soil health. For the last 35 years I have been calling these same ideas "Biological Farming" because I wanted the farmers to focus on soil biology and not just chemistry. The foundation of both Regenerative Agriculture and Biological Farming is to do everything you can to get the soil healthy and mineralized, and when you do, yields and quality will follow. You just have to figure out how best to implement these practices on your farm so you can get your farm's soil healthier and can produce high yielding crops with less intervention. The easy changes to make on your farm include switching to better quality, carbon-based fertilizers using balanced nutrition including trace elements and adding soluble calcium and sulfur. Yes, I know you will say that it's more expensive, but as soil quality improves so will plant health and yields and you will be able to spend less on nitrogen, plant protective compounds and technology. Healthy soils provide a return on investment for years into the future.

Following a biological farming system also improves the soil's resilience. These wet weather patterns we've had the last few years may be here to stay, and your best insurance is soil resilience. A healthy, loose, crumbly soil allows more water to infiltrate and also allows roots to grow deeper into the soil where they can access water and nutrients when the weather

gets hot and dry. Healthy soils produce more resilient crops that produce better yields, even when weather conditions are less than ideal.

The benefits of carbon-based fertilizers also build soil resilience, soil health and crop yields. Our TerraNu fertilizer, a biological, nutrient balanced, carbon-based fertilizer, has been showing excellent results. We've seen a lot of good results when farmers strip till using our dry fertilizers (including TerraNu), followed by a liquid row support like Boost along with CX-1. Applying your nitrogen with molasses-based Boost adds biology and promotes healthy soils and now you are on a path to major farm improvement. Even if you don't strip, but instead bulk spread TerraNu, progress can still be made. Don't forget about adding soluble calcium - how about 500 lbs to 1000 lbs Bio-Cal on beans? This is conventional/biological farming. There are also plans and products for organic farmers.

As we do each winter, this year we evaluated what was working on our family's farm and what wasn't. For this coming year we're going to make some pretty big changes to our crop rotation. We aren't milking as many cows so don't need as much hay ground, but we also don't have as much manure. What we plan on doing on our organic farm this year is more soil building between crops. →



### Cover crops starting to peek out of the cold ground in late March.

We're going to switch the rotation to one year of cover crops with rye, and the next year corn. We will not only have our soils better protected but we'll reduce our costs and tillage significantly as well. Organic corn is our highest return crop but it also takes a lot out of the soil and requires a lot of tillage, so to balance that we'll plant a mixed cover crop in the non-corn year, harvest the rye for seed but leave all the rest of the plant material on the field to build soil carbon.

To reduce compaction, besides the extra cover crops and reduced tillage we are doing more to drive in the same tracks each time we go across a field. We now have all 12-row equipment and GPS guidance systems on our tractors. We are doing all the strips over to be 90 feet wide. We bought a 3-point hitch planter so on the hills we can do a better job of weed control but don't need to plant end rows as we need less space to turn. We are going to stop growing soybeans as they require more tillage and it's harder to control weeds which means more weeds to go to seed on bean years. We already do a lot of mineralization but know we need to increase our sulfur, boron and soluble calcium inputs. I think the other big change is technology. With auto steer and yield monitors we should be able to pick the poorer performing areas and either fix them or at least farm those areas to their potential.

This system should also really build our soil carbon levels. Growing organic row crops does require quite a bit of tillage to control weeds, and while we've always balanced that with adding carbon-based fertilizers, growing cover crops, and leaving on as many residues as possible, our soil organic matter levels have grown pretty slowly over the years. This new system, with a whole

cropping season dedicated to cover crops and minimal tillage, should really accelerate the amount of carbon we sequester in our soils. I'm excited to see what that looks like over the next couple of years.

That's enough changes on the farm for one year - all moves we believe are in the right direction.

There have also been some changes at BioAg this year. Right now I'm getting more actively involved in our dairy nutrition program. It seems like some farmers and consultants got off track by trying to buy production and lost sight of growing it rather than buying it. It's hard to make the animal more efficient without changing the forages you grow. Change the forages and have healthier, great producing cows by reducing inputs and not spending more. We have some excellent, high-quality products that supply needed minerals and keep the animals healthy. Remember our nutrition slogan: give me your dry cows and forages and I will change your farm for the better.

What steps were you going to take on your farm this year? If your farm plan includes makes changes that leave your soil better next year than this, things will get noticeably better. I can't wait until the consumer puts their food dollars on clean, high quality foods. Those of us following biological farming practices will be ahead of the game in producing what the consumers want. We'll not only be improving our soils and making farming easier, but we'll also be growing high quality, nutrient-dense food.

Give one of our consultants a call to help you with your farm plans, and have a great growing year. ●

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## COMING SUMMER 2020: NUTRITION NEWSLETTER

Would you like to receive updates about the Midwestern BioAg Nutrition Program?

We are starting a newsletter with all things animal nutrition starting this summer.

Email [nutrition@midwesternbioag.com](mailto:nutrition@midwesternbioag.com) to sign up for the Nutrition Newsletter!