

A NEW WINDOW OPENS ON 2023 CROP PLANNING

With the crops in the ground, the future of crop planning is on the horizon. Know the feeling of never worrying again about finding the right crop mix...

TUCSON, AZ, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Each year row crop farmers embark on their crop planning journey. The journey may follow a straight line or meander. For many farmers crop planning is a blend of experience, intuition, agronomy, logistics, and the latest news, but profitability is the ultimate arbiter.

Crop planning drives pretty much everything. Use of your land. Use of your working capital. Use of your time and labor. What is more important to get right? The difference between a good or bad outcome for the crop year could be a new piece of equipment, a new piece of ground, paying down debt, the kids' tuition, even keeping the farm and your legacy secure, or not...

Before seeing the future of crop planning, let's look out on today's farmscape.

Upstream crop planning

Gary Schneider, Founder and CEO of Planting Profits®, is an evangelist for upstream crop planning which he defines as more top-down, strategic planning. This is in contrast to the more common bottoms-up approach that starts with crop-field assignments, or a percent acreage split among crops then moves forward from there. Upstream crop planning means evaluating different sets of management decisions across all crop enterprises, simultaneously. The result is



Planting Profits®

Helping producers
grow profits

Planting Profits® saves farmers time, makes farmers money, and gives farmers peace of mind.



Unscramble crop planning...

finding the right balance among profit, risk and asset use. Schneider admits that's a lot to grab and hold.

Upstream crop planning delivers the most benefit to farmers who have some crop choices and some flexibility in rotations. But even corn-soybean farmers who have half a dozen or more fields and who are looking at corn-corn or beans-beans options are likely to benefit by taking a breadth and a step back.

To be clear, upstream crop planning requires some homework. Good estimates for costs of production are needed on a per field or a farm-wide basis.

Management decisions and operational boundaries in upstream crop planning for a NW Texas operation

- ✓ Farm located in NW TX has eight fields totaling 1,329 acres – all irrigated
- ✓ Grows corn, soybeans, wheat, sorghum and cotton
- ✓ Has offer to grow 200 acres high-oil corn contract
- ✓ Has some flexibility in crop decisions; rotation principle is to always change up crops from year-to-year
- ✓ Always wants at least 30% of total acreage in either wheat or soybeans and at least 10% of each
- ✓ Limit cotton to no more than 25% of total acreage
- ✓ Grower is permitted to pump 7,000 acre-ft for season
- ✓ Operating loan \$600K



Example of a moderately complex operation with over 30,000 possible crop-field combinations

Schneider sees four challenges facing farmers wanting to improve their crop planning.

Challenge #1 - The nature of crop planning is complexity

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Farmers who have wrestled with crop planning for decades and who see Planting Profits® for the first time, think it's like magic...”

Gary Schneider - Co-Founder

Upstream crop planning comes before field maps get colored in and before varieties get selected and so forth. Upstream crop planning is often given short shrift because if you don't put some stakes in the ground, if planning starts off with too much latitude, there's an unmanageable number of choices to consider and inter-related decisions to make. Complexity quickly overwhelms mental faculties.

Right now, at the start of the planning cycle many farmers have a tendency to jump the gun. To come up with next

year's planting intentions without fully analyzing all alternatives. Before long it's time for crop-specific field operations and ordering product. Practically speaking, at some point planting decisions become irreversible. But there's nearly an infinite number of corresponding positive and negative outcomes which drive income, income uncertainty and the use of land, working capital and your labor. Perhaps more thorough analysis is warranted before jumping off.

Let's be real. Planting decisions are time-boxed. Many farmers want to get to acreage intentions ASAP. But as market trends and other considerations unfold it may pay to wait. In either case,

there is uncertainty over locking in acreage too soon or too late. This creates mental tension. Once the crop mix is figured out lower-level decisions flow and activities closer to most farmers' comfort zones can commence.

To make this point, Schneider points to a farming operation in NW Texas. This operation has some peculiarities and some dependencies that spawn complexity. Like nearly every farm, it is unique. There are eight or nine key management decisions and operational boundaries to set. There's a lot more going on, but these are what are important to this farmer this year.

Consider the complexity of crop planning for this farm. According to Schneider, there are over 30,000 crop-field combinations! That doesn't include all of the other constraints and considerations. How can anyone realistically deal with this? Better punt... Start coloring in the field maps...

No. Wait. Leading-edge ag-tech thinker, Shane Thomas, drafted a list of [22 Hacks](#) for agribusiness folks. Number three on his list: Embrace Complexity. It is the nature of our modern agricultural industry and the way to maintain our sanity.

Challenge #2 - Farmers field a lot of piecemeal input into planting decisions

Let's begin at the end of the day and at the beginning of the crop planning process where many farmers, along with their partners and family members, find themselves on their own out on a skinny branch. Bombarded by the latest from you name it: agronomists, retailers, marketing advisors, crop insurance agents, landowners, accountants, lenders, neighbors, TV, from everywhere online to everywhere in town. Most farmers, along with their partners and family members have few places to go to get help and no one to turn too to help pull it all together.

Challenge #3 - Farmers need to switch from their fast-brains to their slow-brains

Noted ag-technologist Adam Wolf wrote about fast-brain, slow-brain stuff several years ago. In brief, when it comes to problem solving, all rational folks, and farmers, face a constant struggle between instinct and deliberation. We all rely on the fast instinctive brain that easily makes gut-level assessments. This a well-honed survival skill that in simpler times and in most situations served rationale folks, and farmers, well. Contrast this to the slow methodical brain used to deconstruct, analyze and solve complex problems.

Given the complexities of upstream planning, slow-brain engagement is required. But when Mother Nature tells us to get to work and with pre-pays and other deadlines, farmers are pressed to be done with planning ASAP and get back out to the field or the shop. Given the myriad of competing priorities it's easy to justify fleeing the slow-brain drain and instead turn our attention back to farm chores or the five or six other to-dos or just living the non-farm part of our lives...

There may be limited capacity and patience for upstream planning because farmers have been successful without it. But things change. Farming gets more challenging. Technology accelerates. Consolidation continues. Profit margins compress. Farmers need to tap their slow-brain some to step up their planning game. Plain and simple.

Challenge #4 - New toolset and framework is needed now

For effective upstream crop planning, farmers must be able to offload slow-brain work. Unfortunately, the tools and framework and all-around expertise needed are not readily available. This is a big deal. What could be bigger?

Nothing in farmers' digital toolboxes meets this need. Spreadsheets, budgeting, recordkeeping and breakeven analysis are not enough to adequately mine the opportunity space top down. Most digital ag tools do a great job of tracking field operations and production costs, but when it comes to planning most are rollups of presumed acreage allocations. Unfortunately, this bypasses upstream planning where acreage allocations have not been set, yet...

Given this: Where do you start? What decisions don't unexpectedly commit you to other courses of action? How do you know that this crop mix is "best"? That you haven't left a bunch of money on the table? That you haven't taken on too much exposure? That...?

Analytical tools that could fill the slow-brain gap do exist, off the farm. They use applied mathematics and are rooted in decision science. But these are not readily available to farmers. These tools are used by all of the large agribusiness companies on either side of the farmgate.

Upstream crop planning – a new category

While everything feels like it's speeding up, Planting Profits aims to slow things down; to raise the bar on planning; to lift all farmers' boats.

The ability to evaluate several sets of management decisions across all crop enterprises simultaneously is the essence of upstream planning. The planning model holds all of the farmer's considerations and their relationships to one another so the farmer doesn't have to. The slow-brain is built into the software. The farmer provides fast-brain inputs: their strategic goals, operational knowledge and management decisions. Many farmers will find the ability to hold many things in their head at once, without actually having to, liberating and a significant breakthrough.

The approach gives the farmer a clear path to answer a complex question: How many acres of each crop should I plant this year? The software distills an ocean of planning complexity into something manageable via a framework where almost anything that needs to be considered can be. In doing so, slow-brain requirements are farmed out to the mechanics of the process and embedded in the analytical capabilities of the tool.

Now the farmer can reap the rewards. After the planning model is setup, it's harvest time. A farmer can deploy fast-brain analysis and consider any set of management decisions and the associated crop mix. The farmer can quickly see expected outcomes and understand the ripple effects across the operation. Any planning-related decision can be easily evaluated when it comes up whether its pre-pays, forward sales, acreage changes, IP storage, labor availability, equipment needs, and on and on. There's linkage from strategy to tactics to execution before pulling the trigger on anything big.

Of course, planning tools don't make decisions. No tool is that smart. They support decisions. When decision making and productivity tools work well everything improves. Decisions become easier, less stressful and outcomes are better. This is a way farmers can increase returns to (their) labor.

Planting Profits® sprouts to fill a big niche

Planting Profits® is a new planning tool and online advisory service that helps farmers build their best plans. That's all it does, but that's a lot. The software and service can be used by any farmer to answer the recurring question: How much of each crop should I plant this year? And all that goes with that.

Now let's go back to that Texas farm. That farm had over 30,000 possible crop-field combinations. Planting Profits® found the single most profitable crop mix and asset use, in seconds. Schneider claims there is no other ag-tech tool in the World that can do this. And he adds, "For farmers who have wrestled with crop planning decisions for decades, who see Planting Profits for the first time, it seems like magic."

"A farmer's first optimized crop mix using Planting Profits® is the starting point. From there nearly any set of management decisions can be analyzed. The farmer immediately sees how a given set of decisions impacts income, risk and asset use. Planting Profits raises management IQ out of the box."

Patented optimization algorithms and other deep-tech underpin Planting Profits. Schneider characterizes the software as bringing applied mathematics down to the farm in a very applied way.

"Planting Profits shows where changes at the margins can increase income 10 - 30% by pointing out which management decisions may warrant reconsideration. It shows opportunities that were always present but often unseen. With Planting Profits, you're always looking at the most profitable crop mix for a given set of management decisions. Always. It takes about one hour to model a farm and get a first-pass plan. And once there's a model, (i.e., a digital planning twin), it's easy to update as more information becomes available. It's good ROI, no matter how busy your schedule.

Investing a little time in upstream planning to develop a sound plan establishes a solid point of view. It grows confidence. It brings peace of mind. Now it's easy to move on to other things knowing in short order all of key decisions and crop mix alternatives have been thoroughly evaluated, for now. Assured that no stone is left unturned. No money is unknowingly left on the table. No reasonable risks go unanalyzed. No "got yas" lying in the weeds. All this in about the time it takes to drive to town and back... because time matters."

Farmers access Planting Profits® in one of two ways. During the July pre-launch send an email to get onboarded. Then just log on, view some training and start building your 2023 plan. Planting Profits is free for farmers to use.

Farmers who do not want to learn the software right away, but want the benefits, can develop their plan working online with a certified advisor. Using the service is a good way to learn the planning process and the tool from an expert while building your 2023 plan.

"Time waits for no one, when it comes to row croppers... Fortunately, the window on 2023 crop planning is just cracking open. During the next nine months we'll do all we can to get as many farmers onboarded as possible. Going forward a new planning partner, Planting Profits®, will be just a click away and always ready to lend a hand."

In wrapping up, when asked about the vision, the inspiration and the motivation that sustained a multi-year effort building something radical like Planting Profits, Schneider shared two comments. "Regarding the vision and the inspiration thing, some might consider Planting Profits a technological leap. Hopefully the reason no one asked for it is because no one knew it was possible. We'll soon see. To paraphrase, if Henry Ford would've asked farmers what they wanted they would have said a faster horse... As for motivation, we'll follow the lead of ag-tech pioneer Nathan Faleide, "... (we) just wanted to make something unique and cool that helps people in ag while contributing to the greater good..."

So now that the crops are in the ground, take a [sneak peek](#) at Planting Profits® or check out the [training library](#) or catch a webinar.

About Planting Profits®

Planting Profits® LLC provides tools, training and advisory service that help farmers with their crop-planning. We strive to serve farmers. We aspire to integrate with other solutions that improve customer experience. Our online planning tool is free for farmers to use. Our online advisory service is guaranteed or there is no fee. Planting Profits® saves farmers time, makes farmers money, and gives farmers peace of mind.

For more information

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