Conservation Certification:
Assurances for the Absentee Landowner

Jamie Ridgely
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Conservation Certification: Assurances for the Absentee Landowner

Jamie Ridgely, Agren
Where agriculture impacts the environment, Agren offers answers.
Is this the game we want to play?
Stacking the Deck

1. Direct marketing
2. Landowner advisor
3. Operator certification
Who Makes the Decisions?

N=712

% of Landowners Indicating Operator as Primary Decision Maker

- Tillage practices: 90%
- Crop inputs: 85%
- Conservation practices: 48%
- Tile drainage: 36%

The most efficient and economic way to get more conservation on the ground is to get more ground farmed by conservation farmers.
1. Educate landowners to be better consumers of operators.
2. Allow conservation farmers to differentiate themselves from their competition.

Smart landowner + Conservation operator

❤️ SWAPA ❤️
How is This Different?

vs.

- Field
- Farm
- Process
- Product
Great idea,
will it work?
Criteria Landowners Use to Evaluate Renters

- Amount of rent paid
- Trustworthiness
- Ability to maintain soil productivity
- Reliability in paying rent on time
- Reputation as a good farmer
- Ability to avoid soil erosion

- Ability to avoid contaminating waterways
- Ability to maintain wildlife habitat
- Active in the community
- Like them as a person
- Care about my land
Criteria Landowners Use to Evaluate Renters

1. Trustworthiness
2. Reputation as a good farmer
3. Ability to maintain soil productivity
4. Cares about landlord & land

9. Amount of rent paid
## Attitudes Towards Master Conservationist Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you…</th>
<th>% Not Opposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favor a Master Conservationist program that “certifies” a farmer’s ability to apply soil and water conservation?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent to a Master Conservationist over someone who was not certified, if rent did not change?</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept a lower annual rental rate in order to rent to a Master Conservationist?</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want your renter to become certified?</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Details

- Who will administer?
- Qualification criteria?
- Quality control?
- Standards first or market first?
Are you playing with a full deck?

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