

Where Do Our Crops Go?

In southern Minnesota, most farmers grow two types of crops - corn and soybeans. A few farmers do grow alfalfa, sweet corn and peas. With all the crops grown, where does go?

Why we Grow what we Grow

Market access is **THE most important factor** in determining what crops we grow. Crops with no markets make absolutely no sense to grow. And, in Minnesota, we have an abundance of markets for soybeans and corn.

In addition to the available markets, we raise pigs whose major diet component is corn and soybean meal, which is the main reason why we grow corn and soybeans. We are also able to utilize the hog manure and incorporate it back into the soil as a natural nutrient replacement. It is a great way to use a byproduct (previously thought of as a waste product). Not only do we feel manure is superior to commercial fertilizers, but the cost of manure is less also. We test both our soils and manure so we apply the right amount of nutrients. We don't want to waste it by applying too much nor do we want to apply less than we need because this is next year's plant food. As you can tell, manure is a highly prized commodity and an **asset**. I literally put the value of manure applied to our cropland on my balance sheet.

Where do Our Crops Go?

We have multiple markets available. I can literally see two ethanol plants and one soybean processing plant from the front porch of my house. All three are within 10 miles of our house. We are fortunate with not only the markets available but also how close they are to where we live.

Soybeans

Let's start with soybeans. We plant about a quarter of our acres to soybeans. After they are harvested they are either stored in a grain bin or sold to [Cenex Harvest States](#) - a soybean processing plant. The plant is about five miles away and we put them in a truck and deliver them to the plant. CHS processes the soybeans into [soybean meal](#) which is used for livestock feed. [Soybean oil](#) is also extracted from the soybean to make food and industrial products such as soy oil and plastics. The decision to store or sell at harvest is price dependent.

Corn

We plant the remainder of our acres to corn. When we harvest the corn we usually need to remove the excess moisture from the corn. We accomplish this task by using a [corn dryer](#). If the stored corn has too much moisture the corn will rot and spoil during storage. Rotten and spoiled corn has

no value.

Feed

Approximately one-third of the corn we harvest is used for pig feed. We have an on-farm feed processor manufactured by [Weigh-Tronix](#). Our farm is a little unique in that we make our own hog feed. Many other hog farms have their feed made by a local coop. We like the idea of feeding our own corn because we know where the corn came from, and, oh, I used to work at Weigh-Tronix and I received an employee discount on it. Yes, that makes a difference!

Corn = Ethanol

The other two-thirds of our corn crop is sold to Valero. Valero is an ethanol plant that is located about 6 miles from our farm. Valero produces ethanol and grain distillers. Grain distillers (or DDGs) is what is left over after the ethanol is extracted from the corn. Grains distillers are used in livestock feed. We sell to Valero because we really like the idea of a renewable fuel source and think it is important for our environment. And, typically, we receive a little extra revenue. If we are not able to sell to Valero we will sell to our local coop - Watonwan Farm Service.

We really are fortunate to have good markets available and we don't take them for granted. Check out the [video](#) showing soybeans harvested!