

MN Agriculture: South 89 Seeds and Svc, Where Grass Seed is Grown

Day 28 of my 30 Days of Ag "All Things Minnesota Agriculture" is South 89 Seeds and Service owned by Tony and Amy Brateng from Roseau, MN. She was originally from Monticello, MN where she grew up on a corn and soybean farm with two younger brothers, who are now farming with her dad. Her mom works fulltime at the Xcel Energy Nuclear plant in Monticello. They also had a small cow-calf herd of black angus while growing up. Presently, they grown soybeans, wheat and grass seed.

She visited UMC (University of Minnesota Crookston) in the fall of my senior year and fell in love with the Red River Valley and all the agriculture and combines harvesting wheat that surrounded the long 4 hour car drive to Crookston from Monticello. She also was excited about being able to play collegiate golf at UMC. She attended UMC in the fall of 2004 for a degree in Agronomy and met Tony in the fall of her freshman year at UMC in Crop and Weed ID class and through the golf team.

Her husband, Tony, grew up in Roseau, MN and graduated from Roseau High School. His dad is a agronomy manager at the local cooperative and his mom has worked various jobs in town and is now a full time para professional at the Roseau Elementary School. He has one younger sister who is interning at the Hospital in Town. Tony worked on Steve Dahl's farm for a few summers prior to graduating high school. Tony began attending UMC in the fall of 2002 for Animal Science. He did some grass cleaning work at a local grass seed cleaning plant and soon became interested in majoring in Agronomy.

In 2012 they welcomed their first child, Lauren who will be 3 in January and last year, the day after Christmas, they had their second child, Evan who will be 1 on the 26th of December.

Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?

"My husband and I farm wheat, soybeans and grass seed just a couple miles South of Roseau, MN in Roseau County.

Roseau is located 10 miles South of the Canadian border, home of Polaris Industries and is well know for hockey and fishing tourism at Lake of Woods (located on the eastern side of the county).

I am a sales representative for DuPont Pioneer products and I spend the majority of my time with my seed business with exception to harvest time on the farm and monthly record keeping and bookwork."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"2015 will be Tony's 10th year farming."

How did you start your farming business?

"Tony was given the opportunity to farm a quarter of land in which he raised sunflowers in 2005 by his employer, Steve and Dianne Dahl, at the time. Steve helped with management decisions and provided the equipment needed. The following year, 2006, Steve and Dianne rented out their owned acreage and machinery to Tony. He then graduated from University of Minnesota-Crookston in December 2006. Tony purchased the farm yard, surrounding 240 acres and machinery from Steve and Dianne in 2007. Also in 2007, I rented my first parcel of land located just East of the farm yard. In 2008, I graduated from UMC, and became a sales rep for Pioneer. We were married in January 2010 and purchased an additional 320 acres. Currently we are renting the majority of our acres that we farm and we owe the opportunity to farm as 1st generation farmers to our landlords."

Tell me a little about what you grow/raise/produce/or service provided.

"We have a 3 year rotation of the following crops: Soybeans, Wheat, Perennial Ryegrass (Seed Production).

Our Pioneer Seed business offers some of the industry's best genetics and traits in corn, sunflowers, alfalfa, canola and soybeans. We also provide seed treatment and delivery for the soybeans that we sell. I also provide mapping and map books to help with record keeping for my growers. As well as scouting throughout the season for my customers."

Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?

"The majority of our soybeans are raised for seed production for Pioneer. The seed produced on our farm is hauled to a conditioning plant and packaged to be sold for the following year.

Our wheat is most typically sold at one of few elevators (1 elevator in town, next one is 75 miles to the next nearest and so on...) in our marketing area. Most spring wheat is exported.

The Perennial Ryegrass we raise is also for seed production. Perennial ryegrass is primarily used for various blends of grass seed throughout the United States and Europe. Our fields are inspected by Minnesota Crop Improvement Association and either sold under a quality assured program or as certified seed. Our seed is sold to Brett-Young, Columbia, Lebanon, DLF and Pennington and other major grass seed companies in North America. These companies then blend our seed with other grass seeds such as Kentucky Bluegrass and Fescue and market to retailers such as Menards and

other home improvement retail outlets. The blends are also sold to nurseries and lawn care service businesses. On its own, it can be used for over-seeding golf courses in the Southern United States during the winter months.

The majority of the Perennial Ryegrass production for North American occurs in the Willamette Valley in Oregon, but is also produced in Washington State and parts of Canada as well as Roseau and Lake of the Woods Counties in Minnesota."

What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you proud of?

"I think we live a unique area where grass seed can be successfully produced due to our wet and cool growing season. I think grass seed production has shaped our culture of farming here in Roseau and Lake of the Woods Counties. Because grass seed production is such a niche market, growers have come together for years at production meetings to share what works and what doesn't. But this demeanor doesn't stop just at grass seed production; it's established in every facet of farming."

What is one interesting fact about your farm/crops/livestock/your business you would like to share.

"We are first generation farmers, not all that common, and wouldn't have been possible without an opportunity from a retiring farmer and his willingness to make it work. As well as some dedicated hard work on our own too."

What do you love most about farming/business?

I love the unknown. I love that we both have a general goal for each day, but sometimes how you get there is different than you may have thought/planned in the morning. I love anticipation of tomorrow during the growing season or now since its winter, next year's growing season. Most of all, I love that not many days are the same. Each day presents its own agenda, challenges and rewards.

What is one thing you wish consumers knew about what you do or your farm/business?

"I wish consumers knew all the *sacrifices and hard work* that it takes to put in the crop and take it off and all the stress in between. Specifically number 5 and 6: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jenny-dewey-rohrich/marrying-a-farmer_b_4070105.html Our jobs really never end. As a business owner and producer, I can't step foot outside my office and stop thinking about how the day went or begin planning for the next day, it's always on our minds. The only other harder job I know is

motherhood. *But, both jobs are rewarding and I wouldn't change either.*"

What is your favorite Minnesota location or a fun thing to do in Minnesota?

"In the summer, if we can find time, we like to go to the "Lake"... whether that be Lake of the Woods with Tony's family or our friends near home or go to my parent's cabin located on a small lake just North of Brainerd. I'm not sure what it is about water, but it provides a "change of scenery" in many ways. In the winter, Tony and I really enjoy snowmobiling. Most of our trips are day trips around Lake of the Woods and the Northwest Angle making sure to take breaks at the resorts along shore."

What is one ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about. What is one non-ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about and why?

"Non-Ag related place to visit in MN: [The Northwest Angle](#). What a beautiful picturesque corner of the state. You'll never believe you're just a short hour and half north of Roseau."

More pictures: