

# Conservation Success Profile

## Doug Stout

### Conservation Stewardship Program

Genesee farmer Doug Stout has been growing grains and legumes on his 1850 acre farm for over 25 years. A fourth generation farmer, Stout believes you should always leave the land better than when you got it. Recently, he made some changes to his operation to improve his land.

Stout's neighbor is a no-till farmer and got him interested in trying no-till. Stout liked the results and decided to transition some of his fields to no-till. That's where the USDA's Conservation Stewardship Program helped out. Stout signed up for the program to help offset the costs of a no-till seed drill.



Stout says his yield improved since using the new system. And the benefits of the reduced number of tillage passes are huge, like the fuel and time savings – his hours on a tractor went from two weeks to one. He uses that extra time to farm more acres.

In an area known for its rich and easily eroded soils, the no-till method helps Stout hold onto his soil, "This winter was a big eye-opener – no erosion in any of my winter wheat fields." Five miles away he saw fields cut down with erosion where conventional tilling methods were used.

No-till increases soil organic matter and improves soil structure. Increased organic matter helps hold moisture in the soil as well as hold the soil in place.

Stout also agreed to carry out conservation improvements that will help him more closely monitor his nutrient efficiency. Soil testing to develop a nutrient budget combined with tissue testing in the early growth stages helps Stout to assess how much nitrogen was used by his crop and not lost to leaching. With strict protein guidelines for hard red wheat and high fertilizer costs, improving nutrient efficiency benefits his operation.



*"There's no way I'd go back to the way I was farming before. I'm convinced the way I'm farming now is better for the land."*

#### Contract Snapshot

##### On-Farm Conservation Practices:

- Mulch-tillage transitioning to a no-till system
- Soil sampling to enable efficient nutrient application

##### Practices Added to Enhance Conservation:

- Plant tissue testing and analysis
- Using drift reducing nozzles
- Recycling 100% of his lubricants
- Implementing continuous no-till with high residue
- Harvesting hay in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape

