

# Farm Duo Benefits Future

From the time R.N. Hopper was old enough to remember, he wanted to become a farmer. Looking up to his grandpa and father, he was sure of his future after college. Now, at age 37, R.N. stands side by side with his father Ronnie Hopper on the family farm located in Petersburg, Texas.

Ronnie and R.N. share a bond recognizable and undeniable. From finishing each other's sentences and laughing about how a story is told to the hard work each dedicate to their careers, the father and son duo have become two industry leading no-till crop production farmers in the high plains.

Reported by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, society is facing the dilemma of achieving sustainability in today's livelihood with future resources that are needed. This research predicts that over the next 50 years the High Plains aquifer will deplete by another 39 percent.

With the continuous drought facing the High Plains and the underground aquifer being the main source of water for farmers in this area, finding new conservation methods to produce yield that isn't damaging to the soil is a high priority for the Hoppers.

"We know the underground aquifer in this area is being depleted over time," Ronnie said. "The yield on this farm, water wise, when I came back after college, was probably two to three times greater then than now, but over the years we found ways to manage the water in a way that continues to raise our yields."

Both Ronnie and R.N. graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in Agronomy

through the plant and soil science department. Ronnie received his degree in 1969 and R.N. his in 2000.

Alongside of their career's, both have served time within various organizations. Ronnie has committed time to Plains Cotton Growers as a past president, the Cotton Board of the National Cotton Council, and the Panhandle Plains Land Bank. He currently serves as a Director on the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District.

R.N. currently sits on the Texas Tech College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Advisory Board and is a past President of Floyd County Farm Bureau. Together, they are cooperators with the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation.

While attending school, R.N. spent much time around soil scientists and was a member of the soils team. The knowledge and experience he received played a major role in the choice to produce crops using the no-till method.

"As a farmer, its easy to view the soil as a medium to grow for crops," R.N. said. "We approach and view our crop production through the lens of soil health first rather than crop physiology because we believe that crop physiology more easily falls into place in a healthy soil."

When considering water depletion and erosion of soil, the Hoppers believe that by practicing no-till production they will benefit the future generations to come. Ronnie said he believes no-till is the best production method there is for them, but he that he understands you have to be careful because farming is not the same everywhere.

"Any farmer that's worth his salt wants to leave the land better than he found it and I believe that no-till

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Father and son duo (left to right): R.N. Hopper and Ronnie Hopper.



For the Hopper's, correctly identifying soil needs is a big role of no-tillage production.