

STEVE TUCKER

Interview conducted in 2016 by Pulse USA Sales & Product Development Director, Emily Paul



farm that only averages 14 inches of moisture a year. It didn't take long to see that no-till farming practices were going to help increase efficiency, soil quality, reduce erosion and increase the bottom line on dryland as well as under irrigation.

Over the past few years, a new venture has begun with the drastic increase in acres of yellow field peas in the central high plains region. Steve has diversified to supply this market with high quality yellow field peas with the introduction of AgriForce Seed. Steve and his partner Jeff Olsen offer several varieties of certified peas, winter wheat, Golden German hay millet, and forage pea/oat hay blends in addition to a wide selection of inoculants.

BACKGROUND OF OPERATION

Steve Tucker spent his childhood moving from city to city as the son of an Air Force Recruiter. Each summer he would make his way to the family farm in Southwest Nebraska to work with his grandfather. After High School, Steve attended the University of Nebraska where he received a BS in Agronomy. He returned to the farm to take over the family operation where he now resides with his wife and four children.

When he returned from college, the farm was strictly a wheat and summer fallow operation. Economics of the day dictated that ecofallow corn was a possible viable crop. Steve also began to add proso millet and no-till into the operation. After seeing the effectiveness and efficiency of these ever changing farming practices, additional crops were then added to diversify the rotation. Sunflowers, hay millet, oats and the recent addition of field peas are now part of the farms no-tillage rotation.

The transition of the farm to move away from the tried and true methods of tillage to a complete no-till system was not easy. Adding new technology comes with a steep learning curve. Making changes in the farming methods that existed some 70 years can be trying.

Steve studied and experimented along with his grandfather to find methods that worked on the

Steve is passionate about learning and discussing the changes that are occurring in agriculture. He is an advocate for the future in agriculture, helping to spread the word that there are different ways to achieve sustainability for the future. Reducing tillage, promoting soil health, farm efficiency and helping others change their paradigms in regards to these issues are the core of what Steve speaks to as he works to help shape tomorrow.

In what ways do you see the continued expansion of interest and utilization of pulse crops effecting the agriculture industry in Nebraska? And; how do you see it affecting you specifically as a seed producer?

We are starting to see more and more expansion of pulse crops in Nebraska. They are a great benefit to the soil, provide a way to eliminate summer fallow, and can provide additional marketing opportunities and profit on the farm. As a seed producer, we want to offer the best quality of seed to ensure that our customers have the best opportunity for success. We are learning what works and what doesn't work in our environment. Information and sharing that with our customers is critical.

Based on your experience and involvement with field peas, where do you see the industry headed?



SEED GROWER SPOTLIGHT

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Field Peas are a great fit for our region. We have seen a steady growth in field pea production in our area. We have had some great years and some not so great years. But Peas have been a great addition to our crop rotations; adding in a cool season broadleaf crop that is a legume is something our soils have never seen before. We are still learning as we go, but the future of peas in our area is continuing to be very promising and more and more producers are interested.

How have you incorporated cover crops into your rotation, and what benefits have you seen?

I have incorporated cover crops on our farm the last five years and the acres just continue to increase. I have added livestock also, and I have started grazing our cover crops. It is great to have a backup if something catastrophic happens, like a hailstorm. We are still looking at how to work all of this, but we are seeing a drastic improvement in our soils.

What advice would you give to a producer looking to develop a cover crop system?

Try cover crops slowly. Get advice from those out ahead of you. Be very observant with what works and what doesn't. Know what you want to achieve with cover crops and find a way to get there.

What advice would you give someone looking to try field peas for the first time?

As with anything; start small or with what you are comfortable with. Ask the questions you have to those who are experienced. Peas are a great addition to your farm in many ways.