

Casselton Farmer Focused on the **FUTURE**



Even though Josh Askew is only in his twenties, he's already farming with an eye on the future. That future could include the squirming bundle Askew hoists from the car seat in the back of his pickup.

"Now that I have a son, I'm trying to do everything I can, so he has an

opportunity if he chooses to farm," Askew says about his 7-month old son, Jax.

Askew and his wife, Carley, farm with Josh's father, Jeff Askew, near Casselton, North Dakota. Josh Askew is a fifth-generation farmer. Together, the Askews raise soybeans, corn, sugarbeets and wheat.

Askew wasted little time getting fully involved with the family operation. After graduating from high school in 2011, he started

farming in 2012. It was an easy transition to make because there was little doubt that farming would be his lifelong pursuit.

"Growing up, I was always with my dad," Askew recalls. "From the start, I knew that farming was what I wanted to do, so that's what I did."

Challenging Start

Askew's entry into farming came at the tail end of a period with strong farm prices. An economic

downturn for farm country since then has influenced how he operates.

"Pretty much all I've known has been low prices. That's definitely shaped how I manage now and how I will in the future," Askew says. "I've learned how to operate in these times because that's all I've known. I have plans of how I'll handle managing things when the good times come again."

The Askews' strategy includes diversification. They raise a variety of

crops to help spread their risk and to generate revenue opportunities. Josh Askew says that the family brought sugarbeets back into the rotation five years ago, and “the sugarbeets have really helped pick up the slack with lower bean prices. We have to look to other places to bring money in.”

Keeping costs down is another strategy which Askew employs in order to maximize farm profitability. That practice includes keeping the farm’s equipment costs to a minimum. If money isn’t tied up in farm overhead, there’s more financial wiggle room when economic conditions are a challenge.

Dealing with persistent low commodity prices has forced Josh Askew to hone his grain marketing abilities in order to respond when profitable opportunities arise.

“You really have to stay on top of the markets because, when you get that chance, it goes quick. I’ve definitely had to sharpen my marketing skills and learn how to market a crop successfully,” Askew admits.

Cultivating Leadership

Askew is one of the newest members of the North Dakota Soybean Growers (NDSGA) Board of Directors. He became involved with the NDSGA after being selected to participate in the American Soybean Association’s Corteva Agrisciences Young Leader program. The program develops leadership skills among young farmers from across the United States and Canada.

“I always wanted to get involved in the industry because, if you’re not involved, it’s hard to complain when things don’t go well,” Askew says. “I thought the Young Leader program was a perfect step to get involved. I met a lot of good people and learned how boards work successfully.”

Askew says that he is interested in policy decisions at the state and national level, especially those issues which affect farmers on a day-to-day basis. He also knows that it’s vital for farmers to be represented in policy-making discussions.

“Farmers have to have a presence,” Askew explains. “We have to be involved because it’s extremely important for our future.”

Looking Ahead

Like many North Dakota farmers, Askew is anxious to put 2019 behind him and to move forward. A wet spring, late planting, low prices and early snow gave many growers a gut punch. He’s concerned about all the standing corn and the challenges that could present because as much as half of the state’s corn crop remains unharvested. Despite the challenges, Askew is upbeat about the year ahead.

“With the trade deals that have been signed, especially the Phase One agreement with China and the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, there’s finally some light at the end of the tunnel. There has to be optimism because those deals are what we needed,” Askew explains. “We



Josh Askew knew farming was in his future. He’s working to ensure that opportunities exist if his son wants to carry on the family legacy.

got through the last couple of years, and if everyone sticks to the terms of these agreements, we should start to see some better times.”

Having farmed for nearly a decade in challenging economic times, Askew’s attitude goes beyond youthful optimism to true hope for

agriculture’s future.

“Especially with the trade deals that have been signed, 2020 could be our year,” Askew says. “We’ve got so much good going for us right now that I hope it all falls into place, and we can start rolling again.”

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke