



From Pharmacy to Farm

He may not have grown up on a farm, but it hasn't taken Joe Ericson long to get fully immersed in agriculture.

"I got involved in farming six years ago when my father-in-law was looking for a bookkeeper," Ericson says. "My wife was a bookkeeper for a business in Fargo, and I was a pharmacy technician. Her grandmother's house was sitting empty, so he asked us if we wanted to move out to the farm. She would do the bookwork, and I would work on the farm. It's been one of the best decisions of our lives."

Ericson and his wife now farm near Wimbledon, North Dakota, with his father-in-law and brother-in-law. They're a fourth-generation grain farm that raises soybeans, corn and wheat.

In 2014, Ericson was asked by a

North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) board member to participate in the American Soybean Association's (ASA) DuPont Young Leader program. This nationwide program helps train future soybean-industry leaders. Participation in the leadership program includes a one-year term on the board of directors.

"I thought it would be a good learning experience, so I took him up on it, and now, I am an at-large director," Ericson adds. "I can serve two 3-year terms."

Involvement with the DuPont Young Leader program and on the NDSGA board has given Ericson

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a firsthand look at some of the challenges facing the industry. Those challenges affect farmers in all areas of North Dakota and include water-quality issues and biotechnology.

"Wetland determinations need to be done in a timelier manner. You shouldn't have to wait years to get the results," Ericson says. "I also think that the anti-GMO crowd is getting louder. All types of agriculture are going to be needed to feed the world, so we all need to start working together instead of against each other."

Because of the importance of exports and commerce, Ericson says that transportation issues are always going to be a concern. He says that farmers are also trying to get a better understanding of the Waters of the U.S. ruling. Those challenges are why he believes that NDSGA membership is vital.

"It is extremely important for farmers to be members of the NDSGA. The more members we have, the

more power we have when talking to our legislators about the issues. It's also a good way to find out what's happening in our state and national governments regarding agricultural policy," Ericson adds.

Membership also provides farmers with resources that keep them up to date on important, always-changing trends and legislation in the agricultural community. Membership also provides farmers with the confidence that fellow soybean farmers are keeping an eye on issues, even when they're doing what they love.

"The best part about farming is being able to see your accomplishments every year, from planting to harvesting," Ericson says. "Each year brings new challenges. From the markets to the weather, you always have to be on your toes and ready for changes."

— Story by Daniel Lemke,
photo by staff



Joe Ericson