

Young Leader a Willing Learner

Courtenay, North Dakota, farmer Dustin Helmick knew long ago that farming was his future.

“Grandpa asked me back when I was 12 or 13 years old if I’d ever be interested in taking over his farm,” Helmick recalls. “I said, absolutely, so that’s kind of what I’ve been doing my whole life now.”

Helmick attended North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. He began gradually taking over the farm in 2018 and expects to have the process completed by 2024. He raises corn, soybeans and some pinto beans. Helmick, who got married last October, lives with his wife on the farm where his great grandparents raised his grandfather.

Helmick was the 2022 North

Dakota representative for the American Soybean Association’s (ASA) Corteva Agriscience Young Leader program. The Young Leader program was founded in 1984 to identify and train new, innovative and engaged growers to serve as the voice of the American farmer. Participants commit to attend two training sessions.

The Young Leader program not only enhances participants’ skills through leadership, communication and issues-based training, but it also builds a strong peer network, generating increased success in the attendees’ businesses and communities.

Helmick says that he wasn’t familiar with the program, but a neighbor who is on the North Dakota Soybean Council encouraged him to take a look. Helmick checked the program information online, watched testimonials from past participants and felt compelled to apply.

“I just thought it would be a good opportunity to, maybe, go meet some other people, see some other people’s operations in different regions,” Helmick states.

Helmick applied and was accepted to the Young Leader program. He describes how he learned a lot about the industry and about sharing his voice.

“It was good to listen to some of the people that had been very involved in these boards for years and to understand how global our soybeans markets are,” Helmick says. “Before I did the Young Leader program, I was one of those guys

who just checked the markets every day to see what the price was. I didn’t have the thought process that I do now.”

Helmick says that he also learned about interacting with people who may have questions about why farmers do what they do.

“People are going to ask you questions about things that, before this program, I had no idea were even really topics of concern. We learned how to address them and how to handle those questions,” Helmick explains. “We got some really good information on how to be a good representative for your fellow farmers.”

As the current Young Leader, Helmick participates as a member of the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA).

“I’m really looking forward to serving my time on the NDSGA board trying to do my part. A lot of farmers just want to do their own thing, which I don’t blame them for that at all, but there has to be somebody that is willing to be a voice for everybody.”

The Young Leader program took participants to training sessions in Johnston, Iowa, and to the Commodity Classic, which was held in New Orleans in 2022. Participation was a commitment, one that Helmick was more than happy to make.

“I don’t regret any of it. I loved every minute of it. I would 100% recommend this program to anybody who’s interested, for sure.”

—Story and photo by Daniel Lemke



Dustin Helmick was selected as North Dakota’s ASA Corteva Young Leader and is an enthusiastic advocate for the program.

To learn more about the ASA’s Corteva Agriscience Young Leader program, visit bit.ly/CortevaAgriscienceYoungLeader22

