

MICHIGAN GROWN



Joel Layman
J.D. LAYMAN FARMS
BERRIEN CENTER, MI

What do you farm and how are you managing your acres?

I raise food- and feed-grade grains, hay, commercial vegetables, dry beans, beef cattle, and sheep. A first generation operation, I began my transition to organic farming in 2013, as a move to higher profitability. What I found were results far more robust than financial profits.

Why do you farm?

I was chosen by the most noble of careers at a young age. I am blessed to live my dream everyday as I navigate the challenges of running a business that is unpredictable, highly risky, and the epitome of rewarding.

How is the way you farm protecting Michigan's natural resources?

My method of farming completes the circle of local production and usage, and by definition, becomes a sustainable system. The resources we protect are natural, such as soil and water, as well as social, such as personnel and community. Cover cropping, rotational grazing, solar panels, and remote sensing are some specific examples.



FARM SNAPSHOT

2200

Acres farmed

15

Years farming

8

Years of conservation



What would help Michigan farmers achieve their production and conservation goals?

Farmers need a variety of assistance to achieve their conservation and production goals. We need access to valid, replicated data from cover crop trials, crop rotation trials, and farmer tested methods to improve farm conservation. Many farmers need an assessment of their current practices and actionable plans enacted to help them address shortcomings. Any services provided as outreach become educational in nature, which I believe will create a grassroots type of adoption model. The carrot always being more effective than the stick. Regarding production goals; being able to break the chains that bind many farms to commodity practices would greatly benefit rural communities. Increased profits would allow for a greater number of active operations in the marketplace which then drives the engine of rural economic development.

