



Calhoun County Labre Crop Consulting Earns RRIA Entrepreneur Spotlight

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa – March 27, 2014 -- Iowa farmers are always looking for ways to improve soil health, yield and watershed management, and the latest winner of the Iowa Farm Bureau Renew Rural Iowa Entrepreneur award is a company which is riding the exploding wave of technology to help them accomplish their conservation goals. Labre Crop Consulting of Monroe, started by Calhoun County farmer Brent Johnson, is a crop consulting and data management business which can help farmers do everything from assess the efficiency of fertilizer applications on their fields, to improve soil and watershed conservation.

Started in 2006, Labre uses GPS technology, soil sampling and drone-gathered imaging to make highly detailed, custom recommendations for farmers. "We started by working a lot of telematics and different things to transfer information we gathered from farm operations and remote sensing equipment to help farmers make the best decisions for their farms," says Johnson. But the fast-moving drone technology market has helped Labre take their assessments to a whole new level. "For example, now you can capture very exacting pictures from these drones and each pixel within that picture now has information tied to that pixel; our pixel sizes are basically one inch ground resolutions, so we can even identify individual plants. We measure slopes, watersheds and emergent patterns in corn fields. We can do tile lines too because that technology helps us capture slope and the watershed movement on the land," says Johnson.

Because of the demand for this type of customized information, Labre has grown from a company with a couple consultants to one with nine full-time employees and ten seasonal employees. Calhoun County Economic Development Executive Director Pam Anderson says that kind of success is a real benefit to the entire area. "We don't have a lot of industries here in Calhoun County, so small businesses make up a lot of our economy. As for labor, keeping our young people local is important because we want them to stay around and work and raise their families here. Labre is helping us do that," says Anderson.

"Renew Rural Iowa is all about helping small businesses grow and thrive in rural Iowa because we know how vital they are to the sustainability of our rural communities," says IFBF Economic Development Administrator Sandy Ehrig. Farm Bureau's Renew Rural Iowa program has helped more than 2,500 Iowans successfully own and grow their business since the program launched in 2006. This year, RRIA has a new seminar content, online curriculum, exclusive peer forums for those who qualify and financial advice are now available to Iowa entrepreneurs. More than 35 RRIA seminars have been held around the state since the program began, connecting entrepreneurs, business leader mentors and finance opportunities. Renew Rural Iowa presents "Export Compliance" on April 23 – 24 for companies concerned with international shipments. "The Journey to Your Vision" is offered on June 4 in Chariton. For more information, go to www.renewruraliowa.com.