



# Farmer Profile

## Organic Nutrients Boost Iowa Farmer's Soil Health

For decades, farmers have appreciated the value of manure. Now more than ever, farmers like Brandon Betten better understand the organic nutrients that swine manure provides to boost both crop production and soil health.

"Manure adds organic matter and micronutrients to the soil," said Betten, a cattle, corn and soybean producer who farms near Jolley in northern Calhoun County. "It's also a more economical nutrient source than commercial fertilizer."

Finding the right solutions to make his farming sustainable appeals to Betten, who farms with his father, Brian. "There are so many ways to reach the same end goal of staying in business and growing your operation. It's all about finding out what works for you."

The Bettens value the role that livestock plays in Iowa to help young people get started in farming. Their livestock operation includes backgrounding cattle.

"I take them from 400 pounds to 800 or 900 pounds before they go to feedlots in Iowa," said Betten, a 2002 Rockwell City-Lytton High School graduate who studied criminal justice at Iowa Central before returning to the family farm 13 years ago. "I like the challenge of getting young cattle off to a good start and keeping them healthy."

### More than just manure

While Betten focuses on cattle production, he has further diversified his farming operation by working with Iowa Select Farms to utilize liquid swine manure to fertilize his corn and soybeans.

**"WE FOLLOW A MANURE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT."**

*-Brandon Betten, cattle, corn and soybean producer*

"We follow a manure management plan to protect the environment," said Betten, who is raising his two young children on the farm with his wife, Holly. "We also work with nutrient management specialists to make sure our plan is updated at least once a year."

The plan specifies everything from the manure's nutrient content to the maximum amount of manure that can be applied to the land. While Betten could hire a custom manure applicator, he prefers to handle it himself.

When it's time to apply swine manure in the fall, he transports the manure from the swine barns in a liquid manure tank. The manure is then injected into the soil at the rate prescribed in the manure management plan. He follows the 4R (right time, right place, right amount, right rate) nutrient strategy that helps ensure his crop fertility needs will be met and water quality is being protected.

"Injections and covering helps control odor," Betten said. "It also inserts the manure down into the soil, which is where it's best suited to provide nutrients to the crop."

Being a good neighbor and serving the community are important to Betten, a long-time member of the Calhoun County Farm Bureau board and the Calhoun County Cattlemen's organization. He appreciates how Iowa Select Farms is community-minded, too. "I see them out and about in our towns, giving back to communities and contributing to worthwhile causes important to keeping our rural areas strong."

"They are very professional, easy to work with and friendly, and a cooperative effort between livestock and crops is valuable partnership," he added.

"Livestock production makes a lot of sense for Iowa, because hogs and cattle eat the corn we grow, and they provide nutrients to help grow healthy crops. Agriculture also provides a lot of jobs that keep Iowa's economy growing."



**BRANDON BETTEN**

*Jolley, Iowa*

**CATTLE AND CROP FARMER**



Iowa Select Farms manure recipient and applicator

