

Brockriede Brothers and Lalk Brothers Farms

TEEA 2016 Winner: Agriculture



Wichita County No-Till Pioneers: Brockriede Brothers, Lalk Brothers.

The Brockriede Brothers (Bill, Carl, and James) and the Lalk Brothers (Jimmy, Rex, and William) recognized the need for a change in their farming operations to conserve resources.

Staking their livelihoods, these third-generation farmers took a great risk and fully committed themselves to no-till farming in 1999. They leaned on each other, sharing their initial failures and later successes along the way. Now, 15 years later, the brothers farm roughly 15,000 acres of no-till land, with an additional 13,000 acres under no-till production in Wichita County. Based on the strength of their resolve and their courage to take the first step, neighboring farmers have changed their operations to use no-till methods. As evidence of their effectiveness began to spread, Wichita County became a leader in soil health by promoting practices that enhance environmental sustainability, and maintaining agricultural production goals.

The brothers lead by example and openly discuss issues with their peers. Most importantly, these farms have hosted several research projects and real-life demonstrations of no-till farming to groups including Texas A&M AgriLife Research, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and private companies. The brothers' farms have also been used as sites for educating children, college students, and conservation groups on strategies for water and soil conservation.

As the number of no-till acres continues to grow, water quality and efficiency will continue to improve thanks to the benefits associated with reduced soil erosion, reduced nutrient losses, and reduced runoff. Erosion values modeled on these farms estimated that soil erosion on sandy and clay soils are 75–80 percent lower compared to fields operating under conventional tilling. Further research in the region indicates a 78 percent reduction in sediment loss, as much as a 52 percent

increase in water infiltration, and a threefold reduction in losses of nutrients (such as phosphorus and ammonium) across Wichita County alone.

Over the long term, not only have these farmers enhanced environmental sustainability, but also economic sustainability that their peers can now duplicate. Wichita County farmers are now known as being leaders in practices that promote soil health and enhance environmental sustainability while achieving agricultural-production goals. It all began when two farming families, the Brockriede Brothers and Lalk Brothers, took the initiative to dramatically change their farming practices to improve soil and water conservation.