

Dakota

FARMER

Speak up on SodSaver Page 14

Special report on corn for '09 Pages 32-41

CORN EXTRA



Brothers believe in diversifying Page 57

Zero in on zones

By LON TONNESON

PAUL and Diane Overby have saved 10% to 20% annually on fertilizer in recent years — and they say you can, too.

They vary fertilizer rates using a zone management system.

The Wolford, N.D., couple identify three to five zones with similar yield potential within many of their fields.

They base the zones on soil types, satellite pictures of crop growth, yield maps and topography.

They soil sample each zone separately to determine how much fertilizer they have to add to reach their yield goal.

Then they apply different amounts of fertilizer to each zone in one pass through the field.

New precision farming technology makes it all work, Paul says.

They use a Global Positioning System on their soil sampler and their tractor to identify

Key Points

- Zone management reduces fertilizer use on wheat farm.
- They vary fertilizer rates using zone yield potential.
- Drop in costs allows smaller farms to adopt technology.

zone locations and a rate controller that's tied into the GPS to vary fertilizer rates.

"This equipment isn't just for big farms that grow crops that require lots of fertilizer," says Paul, who raises small grains and wheat on 1,300 acres and operates a farm software sales business called Verdi-Plus.

Precision farming equipment costs have come down in recent years, and zone sampling requires far fewer soil samples than grid sampling to build a good variable-rate map.

"Zone management is an opportunity for even smaller farmers like us to be able to increase profitability," Paul says.

■ For more, see Page 6.



ZONED IN: Paul and Diane Overby look over the management zones they created in a field. The zones have helped them cut fertilizer rates 10% to 20%.

Nominate your Master Farmer

DO you know a Dakota farmer or rancher who deserves special recognition?

Nominate that person for the first *Dakota Farmer* Master Farmer Award.

Two farmers or ranchers from

South Dakota and two from North Dakota will be recognized as Master Farmers in 2009 for their agricultural accomplishments and contributions to their community, state and families. The program was started in the

1920s and is now conducted in many other states by Farm Progress Companies.

Anyone may nominate a man, woman or couple who is actively involved in a farm or ranch in the Dakotas.

The deadline for nominations is March 31. Award winners will be featured in *Dakota Farmer* and honored at special events.

See Page 7 for more information and a nomination form.

See what's new!
www.DakotaFarmer.com
 The best—
 Markets • Weather • News
 Free Commodity Mobile Alerts
 •And more!