

Organic Farming Systems: Carmen Fernholz

Sustainable Agriculture might be imagined as an encompassing umbrella with a progression of management systems defined as totally conventional at one end of the spectrum and totally organic on the opposite end of the spectrum. However, both models are under the sustainable umbrella.

Alternative sources of crop nutrients are a major piece of organic production. Cover crops and livestock manures and compost materials are major sources for this practice.

Alternative weed management practices are also a major practice on organic farms as only approved products can be used. Most weed management is through mechanical means or well thought out crop rotations.

Certified organic farms must follow a set of standards established by the federal government. These farms are directly inspected annually to assure compliance with the national standards.

Organic farms are required to follow conservation practices like any other farms.

Practices that I personally use on my farm:

Robust diversified crop rotation of corn, soybeans, oats, winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, flax, dried field peas, alfalfa.

Flow control on the drainage systems I have installed over the years

Underseeding of legumes in small grain crops

Mulch and minimum tillage of fields

Participation in the CRP program

Restored Prairie

Enhanced wetlands

Field Buffer strips (EQIP)

CSP participation for enhanced conservation practices beyond crop production

Fence line Tree windbreaks and restored farm site wind break

On Farm Research trials

I still have a goal of establishing a beef cow herd as part of the farm

My overall long range goal has always been and continues to be a sustainable viable crop production farm on as small of acreage as possible.

