

FARM NEWS

For this man, soil conservation is a way of life

By DON MUHM

Register Farm Editor

"If we are to have any soil left for future generations, then every effort has to be made to preserve what soil we've got now."

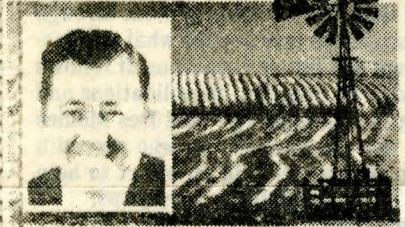
Iowa farmer Thomas Gillespie speaks from a special vantage point. The 43-year-old resident of Clare is an avid soil conservation promoter who can claim to be working a farm which, on paper, is fully protected from erosion.

That kind of soil conservation doesn't come cheap.

"It costs big bucks," says Joe Hammer, a Webster County farmer who owns the farm operated by Gillespie

COUNTRY LIVING

By DON MUHM



and who has financed the soil conservation improvements added by his tenant. Hammer, who is also from Clare, estimated he has put up roughly \$200,000 for soil saving measures at the 613-acre farm run by Gillespie and his family.

Those efforts by Hammer and Gillespie were rewarded last week, when the farm was selected as the best example of soil conservation in the state, in a competition sponsored by the Des Moines Register and Tribune Company. The winner is selected through local and regional competitions supervised by the Iowa Farm Bureau.

The farm owned by Hammer and farmed by his tenant took first place, besting eight other regional Iowa finalists.

Gillespie, who served as an assistant soil commissioner for three years, was recently elected to a 6-year term as a Webster district commissioner. But he credits Hammer with fostering his still-growing interest in soil saving.

"I wouldn't be involved in this if it hadn't been for my landlord," Gillespie said after receiving the state conservation award last week in Des Moines.

Hammer says his own commitment and interest in conservation began when he returned to Iowa in the mid-1940s after he got out of the military service. He was greeted by a family farm in pretty rough shape, one where "a lot needed to be done" in the way of soil conservation.

Over the last four decades, Hammer has spent a small fortune for terraces, erosion control dams, drainage tile and such on that farm. The result from a conservation viewpoint is a farm virtually immune from the forces of wind and water erosion, setting it above and apart from most farms in the state.

Gillespie says that 78 percent of the land is farmed using conservation tillage, reducing the potential for soil losses. Five percent of the land is covered by terraces, which represent the most expensive kind of conservation treatment. The Webster County farmer reports, however, that the building of new terraces may "hurt" crop yields for three to five years. But then crop yields rebound, because of reduced soil loss and greater retention of plant nutrients and moisture.

Another 11 percent of the land is farmed on the contour and features grassed waterways. In addition, there is a 5-acre farm pond, a soil erosion control structure or earthen dam, and a wildlife habitat.

Experimentation with new soil-saving technology isn't ending for this award-winning landlord-tenant operation. This year, they made the switch to ridge-till planting on every acre of corn and soybeans on the farm operated by Gillespie. Hammer also plans to convert to this same reduced-tillage program on five other farms in 1985.

"It's new, and it looks like it's got potential," Hammer said about planting on ridges rather than on flat seed-bed surfaces. The ridge system tends to warm up the soil more quickly, hastening germination, and also lends itself to better placement of materials such as fertilizer and herbicides.

Both farmers say "yields must hold up" before they will give a final endorsement to the ridge-planting system, and soil losses must be held down.

"When erosion is held down, you keep the chemicals from going into the creek," Hammer explained.

"We've got to keep in mind that EPA [the Environmental Protection Agency] is getting tough on chemical pollution," added Gillespie.

The Gillespies also have a hog operation at the Clare farm, finishing out feeder pigs for the butcher market.

Gillespie and his wife, Rosalie, have six children: Chris and Barb, who are both married; Kevin, 19, who is in military service; Terry, 16; Debbie, 13, and Patrick, 5. The parents are both natives of the Clare area, and began farming in 1961 on a place home-steaded by a grandparent.

They still operate that farm in partnership with a relative, Robert Condon, along with the land they've rented from Hammer for about a dozen years.

Conservation work is something to add to gradually over the years, with a little work done every season, says Gillespie. In his own case, Gillespie's interest in conservation has increased while serving as an officer of the Webster County Soil Conservation District.

A "fringe benefit" of holding such unpaid offices as soil district commissioner, Gillespie pointed out, "is the chance to get an insight into what other farmers are doing to conserve soil, and how things are working out for them."



Thomas and Rosalie Gillespie

Iowa prices

For week of Nov. 26-Nov. 30

CASH LIVESTOCK

	Last week	Week ago
Feeder pigs (50-60 lbs.)	\$47.12	\$46.75
Hogs	50.28	49.88
Slaughter steers	66.95	66.38
Kansas City feeder cattle	65.80	65.50
Shorn lambs (choice)	65.50	66.50

LIVESTOCK FUTURES

	Last Week	Week ago
Live cattle (Feb.)	\$66.52	\$67.10
Feeder cattle (Jan.)	71.20	70.92
Live hogs (Feb.)	53.92	53.20

CASH GRAIN

	Last week	Week ago
Corn, No. 2 (Central Iowa)	\$2.43-2.49	\$2.44-2.50
Forward contract (Mar.)	2.51-2.55	—
Soybeans, No. 2 (Central Iowa)	\$5.91-5.96	\$5.93
Forward contract, (Mar.)	5.94-6.00	—

GRAIN FUTURES

	Last week	Week ago
Corn (Mar.)	\$2.78 3/4	\$2.80
Soybeans (Jan.)	6.09	6.10 3/4

POULTRY

	Last week	Week ago
Large eggs (doz.)	51.60¢	53.00¢
Spent hens (lb.)	10.25¢	9.75¢
Turkeys (f.o.b.) (lb.)	96.56¢	91.00¢

CHICAGO FUTURES

CHICAGO commodity	(AP) futures Board of Chicago	— this Trade	The past week was	range of	on the
WHEAT					
5,000 bu	minimum	dollars	per bushel		
Dec	3.61 1/2	3.50	3.53 1/4	—01 1/2	7,456
Mar	3.59 1/2	3.52 1/4	3.53 3/4	—07 1/4	19,487
May	3.52 3/4	3.47 1/4	3.49	—04 1/4	6,970
Jul	3.42 1/4	3.38 1/2	3.39 1/2	—02 1/4	8,807
Sep	3.45 1/4	3.43 1/4	3.44 1/4	—02	421
Dec	3.57 3/4	3.55 1/2	3.55	—02 1/2	58
Fri. Total			51,176		
to open			43,399		
CORN					
5,000 bu	minimum	dollars	per bushel		
Dec	2.69	2.64 1/2	2.65 1/4	—04 1/4	22,441
Mar	2.80 1/2	2.76 3/4	2.78 1/4	—01 3/4	65,494
May	2.87 1/2	2.83 1/4	2.84 1/2	—03 3/4	22,464
Jul	2.91 3/4	2.87	2.88 1/2	—03 3/4	17,614
Sep	2.88 3/4	2.84 3/4	2.85 1/4	—03	2,110
Dec	2.86 1/2	2.81 3/4	2.82 3/4	—02 3/4	4,257
Mar	2.95	2.91 1/4	2.92	—02 1/4	98
Fri. Total			234,906		
to open			134,678		
OATS					
5,000 bu	minimum	dollars	per bushel		
Dec	1.88	1.82 1/2	1.87 3/4	+03	824
Mar	1.82 3/4	1.78	1.82 3/4	+02 1/2	2,225
May	1.79 3/4	1.76	1.79	+00 3/4	966
Jul	1.77	1.73	1.76 3/4	+01 1/4	277
Sep	1.77 1/2	1.75 1/2	1.77	—01	10
Fri. Total			3,691		
to open			4,302		
SOYBEANS					
5,000 bu	minimum	dollars	per bushel		
Jan	6.10	5.93 1/2	6.09	—01 3/4	36,666
Mar	6.23 1/2	6.08 1/2	6.22 1/4	—03	14,241
May	6.37	6.23	6.34 1/4	—05 3/4	9,105
Jul	6.47 1/2	6.34 1/4	6.43 3/4	—06 1/2	7,790
Sep	6.47 1/2	6.35 1/2	6.43 3/4	—07 1/4	1,045
Nov	6.37 1/2	6.26	6.31 1/2	—08	298
Dec	6.37 1/2	6.24	6.31 3/4	—07 3/4	2,483
Jan	6.50	6.40	6.45 1/2	—08 1/2	23
Fri. Total			142,388		
to open			71,651		
SOYBEAN OIL					
60,000 lbs					
Dec	28.00	26.28	27.97	+31	8,971
Jan	26.30	25.06	26.25	—04	12,419
Mar	25.30	24.10	25.08	—20	12,474
May	24.90	23.78	24.55	—35	5,090
Jul	24.70	23.65	24.30	—45	2,785
Aug	24.30	23.60	24.05	—45	464
Sep	24.10	23.60	23.85	—40	244
Oct	24.00	23.40	23.80	—25	129
Dec	24.00	23.30	23.75	—15	262
Fri. Total			75,717		
to open			42,838		
SOYBEAN MEAL					
100 tons					
Dec	150.50	148.10	150.20	—70	7,980
Jan	153.80	151.50	153.40	—80	16,230
Mar	160.00	157.70	159.50	—60	11,194
May	165.50	163.00	164.80	—1.40	6,546
Jul	170.50	168.00	169.70	—1.60	4,070
Aug	172.50	170.00	171.00	—2.00	892
Sep	173.50	171.00	173.00	—2.00	287
Oct	174.50	171.50	173.50	—2.10	378
Dec	177.00	172.00	174.70	—1.50	267
Fri. Total			75,689		
to open			47,844		

Dahlberg takes post as Seed Association chief

Robert Dahlberg of Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. has been elected president of the Iowa Seed Association at the organization. Elected first vice president was Bill Latham, Alex-

ander. Dennis Strayer of Hudson was elected second vice president. The organization named Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Robert Lounsberry an "honorary member" at its meeting.