

A (New) Century Farmer

Given the choice, this Oregonian wants to farm.

COLBY AND HANNAH JOHNSON

AGES: 33 and 27, respectively

CHILD: Baylen

OPERATION: Conley Farms; Cove, Ore.; 4,000 acres of wheat and alfalfa, plus 50 head of cattle. Farm real estate, average value per acre in Oregon, 2007: \$1,720; in 2011: \$2,000.

MASSEY FERGUSON EQUIPMENT:

MF8670 tractor; two Hesston 2170 large square balers by Massey Ferguson; three 9240 Hesston swathers by Massey Ferguson

DEALER: Robbins Farm Equipment, LaGrande, Ore.

GOALS: "In 20 years, I'd like to see me starting to do what my father and mother did for me ... passing [the farm] on to my kids."



Hannah,
Baylen and
Colby Johnson

"FARMING IS REALLY ALL I'VE

KNOWN," says Colby Johnson. "I mean, ever since I could walk I've been running around [the farm] with my dad."

Not that he was forced into the family operation. "I guess the family has always left it open if I want to do it. They're really supportive, but then they never pushed me at a young age, [in case] I ever got burnout or kind of lost interest. It was always up to me."

The result is that Johnson is now the fifth generation of his family to work the same plot of ground—an officially designated Century Farm—in northeastern Oregon. "I love it," he says. "It's just the love of the land and ... kind of being your own independent

Looking For A Little Land

Kind neighbors gave a young man quite an opportunity.

ALL DOUG SASS EVER WANTED TO DO WAS FARM.

But as a high school senior in eastern Iowa, where competition for land is fierce and with his mom and dad farming relatively small acreage, Sass was having difficulty visualizing his dream. That's when neighbors stepped in.

"Retiring neighbors took a chance on a young guy, so I had the opportunity as a senior in high school to rent my first farm," says Sass, who is just wrapping up his 14th year of operations. "It turned out to be a stroke of very good luck, and I hope I can do the same for some ambitious young guy or girl someday."

Doug has learned much of what he knows about farming from his dad, Robert Sass, although they farm separately. "We get along fine; it just works better if we keep our businesses separate," Doug says. "He isn't on his farms too much. He stays busy managing a grain elevator and a trucking company. Dad and I talk back

FAST FACTS: Changing Landscape /// Farmland that will change ownership over the next 20 years: 400 million acres (Sustainable Ag Coalition estimate)