



It takes two to be a good neighbor

The Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers believes it takes two to make a good neighbor. Therefore, the organization encourages farmers to visit with neighbors in advance of making changes to their farms and prior to the transport and incorporation of manure. While there's no one-size-fits-all approach to having a conversation about farming practices, CSIF offers a few tips to help you prepare for a successful and beneficial visit.

- 1) Be personal.** Share information about your family, hobbies and community involvement, how long you've farmed and why you enjoy farming. It's recommended that you include a spouse, siblings or employees as part of the conversation.
- 2) Be specific.** If you're planning to transport or incorporate manure, provide insight about when the work will likely take place, when you expect to complete the work and what fields will receive manure. Also, offer insight as to why manure is used as fertilizer, how manure management plans dictate the amount of manure that is used on a given parcel of land and how the nutrient benefits soil and water quality.
- 3) Provide examples.** Don't talk in generalities. Offer examples about how you raise and care for your livestock, the various businesses and vendors you rely on to get the job done and agriculture's benefits to the local economy.
- 4) Welcome questions.** Remember, two-way communication is best. Listen intently and be specific in your responses. Keep in mind that you're not asking for permission to incorporate manure or grow your farm. Instead, you're providing information and answering questions to make the situation a win-win for both you and your neighbor.
- 5) Follow up.** If you made commitments during the conversation, follow through with them. Consider following up the conversation with a post card a day or two prior to the start of manure incorporation. One farmer has crafted a post card reading, "Excuse our mess, we'll do our best to make this short and sweet. We'll be hauling our nutrients this week. Please let us know if you have an event planned that won't make this convenient." The post card includes the farmers' name and cell phone number.

Knowledge is power. Public outreach, including conducting routine visits with neighbors, can be rewarding and empowering. Make plans today to visit with those you live near today.

Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers
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