John Hoffman farms on the same land his family has been on since the late 1800’s – growing corn, soybeans and soft red winter wheat on roughly 4,000 acres. For the Hoffman family, sustainability is a way of life and the only way they can preserve the family tradition of farming for the next generation of Hoffmans. John says, “Family farming is a way of life, but it’s also a large business.” John considers himself an early adapter of technology and tries to embrace the latest farming technologies available to improve his business. This ranges from utilizing minimum tillage and no-tillage practices, GPS technology and participating in government conservation programs.
No-till farming does not disturb the soil, which increases the amount of water that penetrates the soil surface and increases organic matter, retaining nutrients in the soil. Farmers also use minimum tillage to manipulate the soil to increase soil temperature or reduce moisture. Both techniques reduce erosion compared to traditional intensive tillage, which completely turns the soil.

I think we’re sustainable when we’re able to start every year, able to plant a crop, harvest a crop, and do it again next year. If we’re not sustainable, that wouldn’t happen. If we aren’t sustainable we wouldn’t stay in business every year.

**Water Quality**

Farmers use the same water that urban consumers do, so it is important for farmers like John to be conscious of water quality. On the Hoffman farm, John uses a technique called “tile drainage” to reduce surface runoff. Tiles filter the water through the soil before any excess water drains off the field – potentially minimizing harmful contaminants in the water leaving the field. John and his crew are also careful not to apply fertilizer on frozen ground or prior to a heavy rain so expensive inputs stay in the soil and avoid water contamination.