

# TECHNICAL NOTES

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## THIRTY ONE WAYS TO SELL CONSERVATION\*

Two outstanding characteristics of a successful conservationist are hard work and enthusiastic determination to help farmers and ranchers develop and carry out sound conservation programs through conservation plans. Here are thirty-one ideas which will help the hard working enthusiastic conservationist to succeed:

1. Help a farmer or rancher develop a basic conservation plan whenever he appears ready. If you haven't time to do so immediately, make a date with him when you will have time.
2. During every contact, suggest the advantages of developing a basic conservation plan. Cite examples of neighbors who have profited from their conservation plan. Suggest how a basic plan would help help him solve the problems he is interested in.
3. Suggest the farmer or rancher consider planning his whole operating unit. Don't be content with helping install a single practice without pointing out to him the advantages of considering the whole unit.
4. Tell a conservation story. Be prepared to refer to successful conservation work in the community; cite appropriate research results; display appropriate visual aids, point out, on the ground, conservation problems and their alternative solutions.
5. Never forget you are a conservationist. Be proud of your profession and of your unique ability to help operators solve conservation problems. Make farmers and ranchers feel the most important thing in the world to you is helping them plan and apply conservation to their land.
6. Expect to develop basic conservation plans. In approaching cooperators, use an air of confidence in the plans you are trying to sell. You have nothing to apologize for, so expect them to work with you because it will be well worth their time to do so.

\*Reprint from part of Nebraska Technical Note No. 8 by D.E. Hutchinson, State Soil Conservationist.

7. Find out what aspect of conservation the farmer or rancher is most interested in and go from there. More and better feed for a good herd--economy of equipment operation--increased yields--protection and improvement of the soil--these are a few of the many product features in your sales bit that will help you sell conservation plans.
8. Ask questions and listen carefully. You may think you know what a cooperator needs, but you must find out what he thinks he needs and wants to do.
9. Start with what the farmer wants to do and go on from there--that's progressive planning.
10. Let a new cooperator try a sample of conservation by helping lay out a needed practice or two. But always relate such practices to the needs of his entire unit. Point out that the full potential of conservation will be realized only when all the needed work is planned and applied.
11. Review the total conservation needs of the farm or ranch and call attention to those practices the operators should consider applying next.
12. Find out what the cooperator's goal is in his farming operation and show him how conservation farming will help him achieve it quicker, better, or more profitably. His family status--debt situation--soil resources or lack of them--labor and equipment supply--these are some of the things a farmer must consider in making his plans.
13. Suggest conservation alternatives. There may be sound reasons why the cooperator can't follow your first suggestion. If he chooses one of several alternatives, the decision will be his and he will be more willing to carry out his own ideas.
14. Sell benefits. You have nothing to sell but benefits. But you have a potent appeal in conservation benefits. Help cooperators work out to their own satisfaction: (a) How much it will cost them to carry out the conservation program they need, and (b) how much it will return them over a certain period of time.
15. Emphasize costs of not practicing conservation. Soil losses, declining yields, lack of good feed for livestock, fertilizer washed away, potential income sacrificed by failure to practice good land use, and excessive maintenance and operating cost of equipment are all costs of operating a farm or ranch that can be reduced or eliminated if a good conservation plan is followed.

16. Prove that conservation is an investment--not an expense. Show how conservation will pay even if the money to carry it out has to be borrowed. Call their attention to cost-sharing and conservation credit sources that are available to almost every farmer.
17. Get a commitment from the cooperator. If he is undecided, get him to agree to go with you to see some work nearby, to study some pertinent material you are going to leave him, to make a date for future discussion of his problem. A cooperator may not be ready to make a basic plan for his unit, but you should never leave him without a commitment for further discussion with you.
18. Use all the inducements available. The help you and the SCD can provide are valuable. Other agencies can also help. But his help will be most valuable if received in connection with carrying out a basic conservation plan.
19. Watch for the reactions of the operator and his family. If he, or his son, show an interest in some phase of conservation, you are well on the way to "selling" a basic conservation plan. Take advantage of that reaction.
20. Demonstrate. Help solve a problem the cooperator is concerned about. Demonstrate--your help is effective. Success breeds success. If you can help a cooperator successfully with one problem, he will seek your help on others.
21. Present your conservation story simply, clearly, and in terms that make it easy for the cooperator to relate it to his farm and his problems.
22. Help the operator first with what he is most interested in. Get started as soon as possible with the conservation job most wanted, but while helping with that, point out other obvious conservation needs.
23. Sell the advantages of a basic conservation plan--the cost is worth it. Farmers would rather do a good job, if they understand what a good job is, than do a partial job of conservation and still be plagued by many unsolved problems.
24. Don't make it hard for the farmer or rancher to decide to practice conservation. There are usually two or three equally good ways to do a job. There may be a dozen others almost as good. Don't confuse the decision by suggesting a great many alternatives. Concentrate on the two or three best ways.

25. Remember, many farming decisions are family decisions. Try to get acceptance from the cooperator's wife and children too, if they are old enough to be consulted. Very often the wife or children are the first to recognize the advantages of conservation.
26. Don't let the cooperator put you off. Sure he may be busy when you are scheduled to work with him. But if you have convinced him that your services are valuable and that you are busy too, he won't put you off. If that happens, it is time to review your methods of working with people.
27. Don't talk to a cooperator--talk with him. Your success will often depend on how much of the talking you can get the farmer to do. When he has made a planning decision, record it and go on to the next problem.
28. Always talk about a conservation plan for the complete unit. If the cooperator doesn't understand fully the advantages of a conservation plan for his complete unit, he won't be interested in developing it.
29. Never leave a prospective cooperator without letting him know you sincerely hope that he will decide to go ahead and develop a conservation plan for his unit and that you are willing to help him do so.
30. Be prepared to show that many cooperators in the community have found conservation to be profitable. If you can cite only a few who are practicing conservation, they may have no influence with the particular person you are dealing with. If you can refer to many people, you are more than likely to include a trusted neighbor or friend who will be your ally.
31. Talk conservation each time you meet a farmer or rancher--and each time you talk to him try to move him one step nearer the development of a basic conservation plan.

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