



# How planning and accuracy help reduce spray risks

Fred Helms, Southwestern Illinois

**"It's greatly enhanced our ability to be able to plan ahead for the days when the weather allows for spraying conditions to match the label requirements."**



Fred Helms

Fred Helms has been farming full-time since 1984, after attending the University of Illinois. Since then, he's been growing corn and soybeans in the southwestern part of the state, about 22 miles east of the river terminals.

Helms is a big proponent of using technology to enhance decisions on the farm. "As a business, we are early adopters of newer, profitable technologies — especially where we can see the value," he explained.

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**"In the 5 to 10-day out space, they really get the timing of a front's arrival and the amount of precipitation we are likely to get. There are other products on the market, but they aren't as good as DTN."**

Fred Helms

### **What he was up against.**

Helms wanted a better way to plan ahead and ensure that his spraying applications stayed on target. For that reason, he was one of the first producers to add DTN Spray Outlook when it launched in early 2018.

### **What we did to help.**

DTN Spray Outlook factors in multiple weather variables and product label thresholds to provide clear, color-coded risk outlooks for specific locations.

It uses an intuitive red/yellow/green color scheme to indicate the risk level from day to day, hour to hour. It also displays inversion and precipitation risks, wind speed and direction, dew point, and temperature — all on a single screen. That's ideal for Helms.

### **What the impact was.**

"I really like the way the spray outlook is organized," he said. "The day-by-day color coding lets us look ahead at the work week to plan the days that we're going to do the spraying. It also allows us to look ahead at the wind conditions and direction, which is becoming more important with some of the newer regulations on the labels. This allows us to stay on label and be respectful of neighboring properties."

DTN Spray Outlook also helps him plan which areas to work first and when to stop an application.

Helms's spray outlook is fed by his DTN Ag Weather Station. Located on his farm, it gathers highly-accurate, field-level weather and agronomic data and incorporates it into actionable forecasts and alerts. While it saves him time and supports fieldwork, Helms particularly enjoys using it for benchmarking.

"I like to compare current weather at our site and other sites against the historicals during wet or dry periods," he explained. "It lets me know how much different things might be and how it fits together as a piece of the puzzle when our crops are developing. It helps me determine what our risks or opportunities might be for yield."

Helms appreciates the accuracy of his solutions and what it helps him to achieve. With them, he is able to find more and better windows for spraying and fieldwork. That's been a challenge with the increasingly wet spring seasons in his area.

"Being able to identify those windows of opportunity helps me cover them and manage my resources better, including people and equipment," he explained. "It's especially helpful for those who use part-time people and need to plan ahead on when to call them in. Knowing when it will be dry or sunny enough helps us get more work out of those productive days."