

# Greg Ruestman CUSTOMER STORY



## PROFILE

NAME	Greg Ruestman
LOCATION	Central Illinois, USA
FARM SIZE	2400 acres
CROP	Corn and soybeans
PRODUCT	AgGPS Autopilot system

## RUESTMAN'S AgGPS EXPERIENCE:

- Modular design allows system to grow with your needs
- Increased productivity
- Saving fuel costs

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The Ruestman family has been at the forefront of precision farming since the early 1990s. "Dad (Arlen) was one of the first farmers in the area, if not the country, to adopt variable rate with GPS back in the early nineties. They were running office PCs in the tractors because laptops didn't exist! They had to have voltage converters and differential corrections weren't even available!"

Greg Ruestman remembers looking at yield maps "the lines would be all squiggly because the raw GPS and differential we had at the time wasn't very good. It got a bit better with beacon signal and the Trimble AgGPS<sup>®</sup> 132 ... then we went to the AgGPS 252."

So, the Ruestmans know their stuff when it comes to precision farming: "I tell you what, I've been around a lot of other GPS equipment and it sure seems that, when it comes to guidance, Trimble definitely has an edge."

The family farms 2400 acres in Central Illinois, growing corn and soybeans. For the past 5-6 years, Ruestman has used an AgGPS 170 field computer with a lightbar and beacon differential corrections. He rates the AgGPS 170 field computer very highly: "just having the tool to see an application map. I could see which parts of the field got sprayed, which I missed ... it is a marvelous tool and it really changed and enhanced the way that I spray" enthused Ruestman.

Then, he heard about Trimble's AgGPS Autopilot<sup>™</sup> automated steering system. "When we got looking into Trimble Autopilot with RTK corrections, and realized that the AgGPS 170 could actually drive a

planter around the field ... not just straight lines but do the headlands as well ... that sounded pretty interesting!"

After serious investigation, Ruestman decided to purchase two Autopilot systems in April 2005. They are installed on two Case MX 255 tractors, 2004 models. Ruestman hooks into the RTK base station network established by his local dealer, LINCO. The network gives them a 10-mile radius that covers their entire farming operation. Ruestman remembers "watching the tractor being able to drive in it's own tracks, around and around the perimeter of a field where nothing is straight ... you have contours, bends, corners ... you look back and the tractor tires are in the same tracks as before ... it's impressive! I tell everyone, 'when it comes to an Autopilot, straight lines are child's play' after watching one do headlands."

In November 2005, seven months since purchasing the system, Autopilot is a key tool on the Ruestman farm. "We're getting to the point where it does everything. All of our applications as far as chemicals, fertilizer, planting, and harvesting ... pretty much everything; we'll soon be 100%."

The Ruestmans Autopilot systems are playing an important role in a major overhaul they are currently undertaking: switching from conventional tillage to strip tillage.

"Instead of going out in the fall and working the entire field, we're just working a narrow strip. Then we come back in spring and run our planter right over top of the strips and eliminate the need to go out there and work the ground again."



Strip tillage eliminates 4–5 passes that would be necessary using conventional tillage methods. Imagine the savings: “With the fuel prices going through the roof, which we weren’t really anticipating, strip till makes it that much more profitable with all the fuel you’re saving.”

Ruestman explained that the strip tillage approach puts a lot more emphasis on “getting out there for timely application of chemicals ... killing your weeds ... because you’ve eliminated the option of going out there and tearing the weeds out with steel, so you’ve got to upgrade the other aspects and that’s what we’ve done. We’ve taken a lot of the money we had invested in the tillage equipment and slowly transferred it over to technology.”

When asked if strip tillage would be possible without a system like Autopilot, Ruestman replied: “There are people that are doing it without an Autopilot system ... they’re using row markers. But a lot of those guys are having marginal results because, come spring, it’s extremely tough to find the strips and to consistently keep a planter on top of them. From numerous people I’ve talked to who have done it with both Autopilot and row markers ... everybody would tell you there’s just no comparison.”

Ruestman purchased his Autopilot systems from local Trimble Dealer LINCO in Elpaso, Illinois. “We looked into other GPS systems but they lacked the features that the Trimble Autopilot has. We have experience with our local Dealer, the support is super, and that is very important.”

For the Ruestman family, GPS technology has played, and continues to play, a huge part in running their successful farming operation. “It’s getting to the point that all these fields, everything that’s done inside the boundaries, will be put there with that Autopilot system. All the rows ... their direction in terms of their relationship to the boundaries ... that’s going to stay the same year in year out.”

Next Spring will be an exciting season for the Ruestmans, when they plant their rows of corn directly on top of the strips that they are preparing now. “We’ll be going back out into the field and that same file that drove us around the field 6 months ago will take us back down the exact same tracks again.”

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