

NOYF: Wisconsin couple named National Outstanding Young Farmers

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Joe and Ashley Dudkiewicz of Crivitz, Wisconsin, were selected national winners for 2022 at the annual National Outstanding Young Farmers Awards Congress held Feb. 3-6 in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Four national winners were selected for the award based on their progress in an agricultural career, extent of soil and water conservation practices, and contributions to the well-being of the community, state, and nation. Guest Master of Ceremonies Tom Steever of Brownfield Ag News announced the four national winners for 2022 and 2021 after last year's event was postponed. The three other national winners for 2022 are from Illinois, Tennessee, and North Dakota. National winners received a savings bond from corporate sponsor John Deere and the opportunity to travel to represent the NOYF at future agricultural events.

Joe and Ashley Dudkiewicz of Crivitz, Wisconsin, grow row crops and cattle on over 1,500 acres with 32 different landlords. A portion of those acres was originally purchased by Joe's great grandfather in 1927, adjacent to the original family homestead established in 1896. The deep roots in agriculture established during Joe's childhood resulted in his choice of a career in production agriculture, and he completed an associate's degree in Farm Business to improve his management skills. Ashley is responsible for the farm's bookkeeping and budgeting, fertilizer and planting prescriptions, and cattle management and marketing. Selling farm products directly to the consumer has increased their returns, including direct marketing of beef, selling bagged corn as wildlife feed, and selling smaller bales of hay and straw. Joe helps with the cattle operation and manages the farming, using no-till practices and nutrient banding as well as implementing grass waterways in the conservation management program. Children Jeremy, Annabelle, and Jameson are also actively involved in the farming operation.

The NOYF program is the oldest farmer recognition program in the United States, selecting its first group of national winners in 1955. The program is sponsored by John Deere, administered by the Outstanding Farmers of America (OFA), and supported by the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and the U.S. Jaycees.