Beyond the Invoice: Are You Reaching the Full Farm Decision Network?

The generational transfer isn't just getting closer, it's getting bigger. Each transition now represents nearly twice as many acres as it did in 2023.

The Check Has One Name. The Decision Has Eight.

Operations are consolidating while the buying group inside each one grows. Ag marketing has traditionally been built around identifying the producer, operation or account most likely to make a purchase. But as farms consolidate and decision-making becomes more complex, reaching one name does not necessarily mean reaching the people influencing the sale.

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USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

60% of farms have *more than one decision maker.*

The trend

Up from 54% in 2017, with growth in every multi-producer category.

The involvement

Land use and crop choices are made jointly on most multi-producer farms.

Why it compounds

Purdue's 30-year producer study: a "more complex decision process with each iteration."

*Sources: USDA Census of Agriculture 2022; Farm Journal Intelligence producer records; Purdue LCP 2025. *2026 YTD through Q1.*

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, 60% of U.S. farms have more than one decision-maker, up from 54% in 2017. For marketers, that creates an important distinction: an operation is not an audience of one.

The Customer Record Only Tells Part of the Story

A database may identify the owner, payee or primary operator. But purchase decisions can also involve the next generation, agronomists, livestock managers, veterinarians, spouses, business partners and trusted retailers. Some of those people may never appear on an invoice or traditional customer record, yet they can still influence what gets researched, considered and ultimately purchased.

That means repeatedly reaching one known contact isn't necessarily the same as reaching the buying group. For ag marketers, this creates a distinction: a farm operation is not an audience of one.

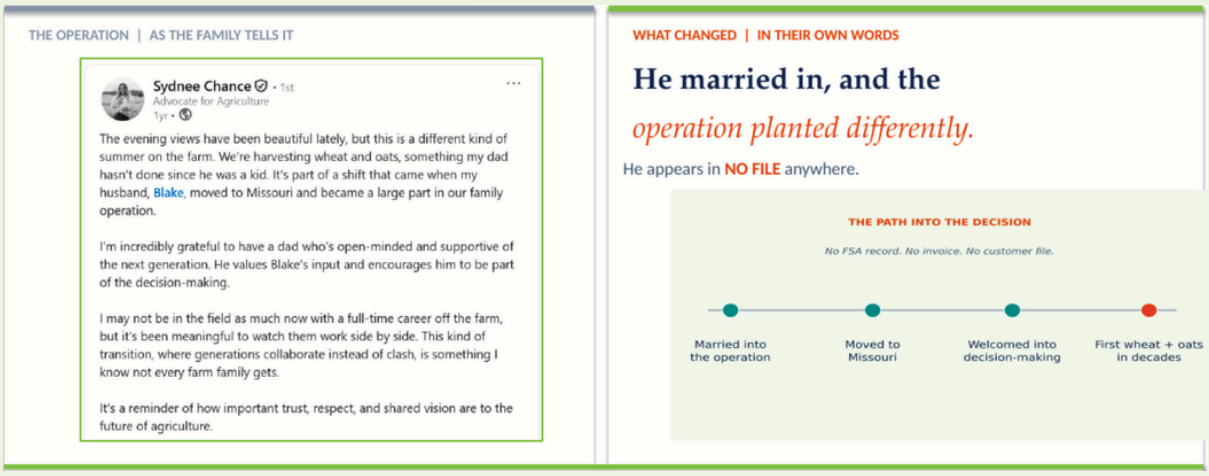
Case Study:

Jorgensen Land and Cattle:
One payee record, eight decision-makers

*One payee, eight decision-makers.

*Jorgensen is one operation. The pattern holds at scale.

Summers Farms:
The influencer no invoice or customer file can see.



*Not on the FSA record. Not on an invoice. Encouraged into the decision-making by the owner himself.

Retail Relationships Add Another Layer

The farm itself isn't the only place influence happens.

CONNECTION	WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT IT ENABLES
Grower to retailer	Self-reported primary retailer: the relationship, not the transaction	*Campaigns that respect the channel a grower already trusts*
Retail location to staff	Employee reach inside those locations via Farm Journal retail media	*Counter-level awareness when a program lands*
Coverage	25% of 1,000+ acre records (85K) report a primary retailer name	*Growing through continued investment in grower-retailer links*

Retailers and other trusted advisers can be among the final voices producers hear before making a purchase. Understanding those relationships adds another dimension to audience strategy beyond simply identifying who operates the farm.

The Marketing Lesson: Plan for the Decision Network

Go back to one of marketing's most basic principles: know your customer. But expand the definition.

Instead of asking only: Are we reaching the right operation?
Start asking: Are we reaching the people who influence the decision within and around that operation?

Consider three layers when building an ag audience:

1. The Buyer: Who ultimately makes or authorizes the purchase?

2. The Decision Network: Who researches, recommends, influences or helps evaluate the decision?

3. The Trusted Influencers: Which retailers, advisers and industry relationships influence the final choice?

Before Your Next Campaign, Ask:

- Are we targeting an operation or the people behind its decisions?
- Who influences this purchase beyond the primary customer record?
- Are next-generation decision-makers represented in our audience?
- Which trusted advisers or retailers influence the decision?
- Does our channel mix give us opportunities to reach multiple members of the buying group?

Farm Journal Intelligence identifies the people your current data can't see, so your campaign reaches the decision network, not just the name on the check.

Ready to see your hidden buyer group?
Talk to us at talktoanexpert@farmjournal.com

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