

# The Shark Farmer

Rob Sharkey wants people in agriculture to realize that what they do is critically important. That sentiment isn't just a patronizing platitude; it's part of what drives Sharkey, known as the Shark Farmer, to use numerous digital platforms in order to help tell agriculture's story.

Sharkey is a corn and soybean farmer from Illinois who is also a whitetail hunting outfitter. Several years ago, he had a hunter come in who did a hunting podcast. The more she talked about her podcast, the more Sharkey wanted to pursue his own podcast to tell hunting stories.

"We did one, but if you weren't there and if you didn't know the people, the stories really weren't that funny," Sharkey admits. "The second

podcast we did was with a farmer. That one really gained a lot of traction on social media, and it just grew from there."

Sharkey started the podcast in 2017, intending to take the effort seriously. He told himself that he wasn't going to miss a week, and he still hasn't. He's produced a podcast each Tuesday for more than 240 consecutive weeks.

A funny thing happened during those weeks; more opportunities arose for Sharkey. Now, he's on Sirius XM Rural Radio, and he does video segments for RFD-TV and Successful Farming TV. He also continues to produce the Shark Farmer weekly podcast.

"Opportunities would just come

up. The podcast was doing really good, so I was offered the show on Sirius XM radio. Then, that morphed into doing some of the stuff on TV, that's where the TV show came from," Sharkey explains. "It was never a deal where we needed to do all these things to get a TV show. It just sort of happened organically."

Sharkey says that his platform isn't about promoting himself, but it gives people an opportunity to connect with farming and rural living.

"What I did was genius, and I didn't even realize I was doing it," Sharkey quips. "All I do is I give a platform for other people in agriculture or with the rural lifestyle to talk about themselves. It's not about me at all. People could care less about my opinion, but we give a good enough platform to where we can get good stories. If I do have a strength, I think I do pick good interviews with

interesting people. We talk more about the person and not necessarily about how many acres or what they farm. We aren't afraid to go into some of those taboo areas."

Sharkey will be part of the 2021 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo in February. He intends to share with participants just how important agriculture is and how valuable their efforts are.

"I think we forget how vitally important agriculture is because we're so immersed in it. When we look at how the people outside agriculture look at us, I think that's a different perspective. A lot of times, you'll hear farmers say that people just don't appreciate what we do. I don't think that's true. I think they don't understand what we do," Sharkey states. "If we can create platforms to actually show people outside of ag, then that will go a long way when it comes to what kind of regulations we're going to be facing."

Sharkey subscribes to the notion that, if farmers don't talk about what they do, someone else will, and farmers may not like what's being said. While he has communication platforms that most farmers don't have, farmers do have good stories to share.

"If I ask someone to do an interview, nine times out of ten, they'll ask, why do you want to talk to me? I don't do anything special. I just farm," Sharkey says. "I don't think people realize just how fascinating what we do is to people outside of ag."

Sharkey's virtual presentation at the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo will take place on Tuesday, February 23.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy Shark Farmer



Illionois farmer and hunting outfitter Rob Sharkey uses his digital channels to tell agriculture's story.

**February 23 and 24, 2021 | 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CST**

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