Reluctant Farmer Scenarios

Scenario 1:

You are a group of contract hog farmers in the county. Because of current environmental regulations, you all irrigate out of your lagoons onto Bermuda spray fields. You periodically cut the Bermuda, dry and bale it and sell it locally for an additional income.

Questions/ Concerns:

* I don’t have the equipment to harvest the biomass.
* I need the income from selling my hay.

Scenario 2:

When corn ethanol became “the next big thing” several years ago, you and the other producers in your group bought it. You started planting corn for the local processor to make ethanol. Unfortunately, this drove up the demand, and therefore price, of corn for livestock producers setting off a chain reaction that negatively affected the amount of money you made, the price of food, and the local economy. The corn ethanol plant closed and you swore off biomass for good.

Questions/ Concerns:

* Corn ethanol was unsuccessful before. Why is this different?
* I don’t want to lose money again.

Scenario 3:

You’ve been around the agriculture industry for a loooong time but you have never heard of growing such a thing as arundo donax. You know the impacts that other “foreign” plants, like kudzu, have had and they are not good.

Questions/ Concerns

* How do we know it is safe to introduce a non-native species?
* What if I decide I want to get rid of it and plant something else?

Scenario 4:

As a farmer, you have a lot of equipment on the farm that runs off of gas powered engines. You’ve learned the hard way that ethanol can really damage engines.

Questions/ Concerns:

* Why should I want to take part in producing a fuel that is going to damage property?
* Will the engine damage cause people to stop buying ethanol and cause the company to fail and me to lose money?

Scenario 5:

You have been on board with alternative fuels for a while and have been looking for just the right opportunity to get involved. You have 20 acres of fertile, level land that is currently cleared but not in use. You have almost decided to cover the land in solar panels.

Questions/ Concerns:

* What is the advantage of planting a biomass crop instead of installing a solar field?
* What will require the greatest amount of work?