Good Farm Management

Outline
• Why GFM instead of Sustainable Agriculture, Agroecology, organic?
• Principles of GFM
• How the principles create the practices

Introduction
• Goal: efficient and economic agriculture with least depletion of non-renewable resources, least pollution of environment and least negative effect on ecology. People (and animals) have good, healthy lives.

The problem with sustainable
• For how long? It's 5 billion years til sun burns out; 1 million til the asteroid...
• For who?
• And, there is an opposing point of view: A significant number of people believe a higher power decides. All the earth’s resources exist to serve humanity, and something will happen before the resources run out.

• Agroecology: nothing ecological about agriculture
• Organic: a legal method of describing crops grown using a set of regulations
  – Not necessarily sustainable, ecological, defensible, nor understandable!
  – Organic will only be profitable if consumers will pay, and some (most?) producers are kept out. Unless the entire food system changes.
Everyone defines sustainability differently

• Don’t bother
• Ok, but it’s gotta be economically the best from the start
• Ok, but don’t bring social justice into it.
• Ok, but economics don’t matter, only ecology
• Ok, but ag isn’t ecological so leave that out
• I just care about not eating pesticides
• So: pick and choose what works for you. And stay on the right side of the law!
• My job: make sure the techniques you choose are informed, not ignorant; and legal.

The principles of GFM fall into 3 broad categories

1. Ecological
2. Social
3. Economic

Ecological

• Four sub-principles
  1. Preserve or improve soil organic matter, prevent erosion & water degradation.
  2. Rotate crops.
  3. Minimize off-farm inputs
  4. Design cropping system to resist pests, diseases, nutrient deficiencies and nutrient excess.

Social

• Treat people fairly. (animals too.)

Economic

• Viable business.
• Match the things we do on the farm (practices) with the principles.
• Which are 'good' which are 'bad'?