



# VILICUS FARMS

## HILL COUNTY, MT

Doug and Anna Jones-Crabtree are land stewards who operate over 5,600 acres in far northern Montana at [Vilicus Farms](#). Their holistically-designed operation is an experiment in sustainability at scale, where crops, conservation, and energy intersect.



Lentils growing (all photos credited to Vilicus Farms)

In 2016, Iroquois Valley Farms purchased 320 acres for Vilicus Farms to expand their operation. Specializing in ancient grains and legumes (wheat, emmer, spelt, durum, kamut, barley, lentils, and more), Vilicus Farms grows food found across brands including Nature's Path, Annie's Mac N Cheese, and General Mills, to name a few. Working with nature is a major theme at Vilicus Farms, where the land's capacity for resilience is maximized by planting extensive cover crops and conservation strips. Crops grow in five and seven year rotations to increase biodiversity, support soil building, and enable resistance to disease, weeds and pest cycles. In total, Vilicus Farms has 27% of its land in conservation, which Doug and Anna estimate might be the largest conservation effort on a single farm in the U.S. Anna's view is that "organic and sustainable agriculture represents a way to spur helpful outcomes for the world – to grow community and collaboration, to participate in and grow local economies, to restore natural systems, and do well for the earth and thus ourselves." Vilicus Farms is committed to working at a scale that makes a difference in creating a sustainable food system that plays a significant role in solving climate change.



These first-generation farmers entered the field after working in agricultural systems; Anna as a civil and environmental engineer and Doug as a farm manager, organic inspector, and researcher. Anna and Doug's vision for Vilicus Farms is to have a net-zero, closed loop system where all energy needed to power the farm is produced on the farm. In 2016, Vilicus Farms was net zero in their electricity consumption. Additionally, Anna and Doug run an apprenticeship program to train the next generation of organic farmers. The apprenticeship program is part of their effort to build community among organic farmers in rural areas and inspire young farmers to enter the field. According to Doug, "We not only need to build soil. Organic farming systems can help build rural economies. We are in the community-building business."

