Why I think Farm Works Mobile is Awesome

Part of a mapping software plan is the collection of geographic data. While I think the most important functions of the complete system happen in the office, data collection has traditionally started in the field and wisely collected data is an excellent foundation. Regardless of the office software that the data will end up in, FW Mobile is a best of breed choice for in-field software. To qualify for best of breed a software program has to: run on more than one kind of device or operating system, have scalable capabilities, be streamlined for ease of use in the field and be able to input and output from multiple sources. So how does FW Mobile stack up?

1. It runs on any Windows platform so you can load it on a smartphone (for some functions), handheld, rugged notepad, netbook, laptop or desktop. (Ok so you aren't going to have a desktop bouncing around with you on an ATV, but some folks like to have a copy of FW Mobile installed in the office to view files or setup templates.)

2. It has a small footprint so it does not take up much space and runs quickly even on modest systems, which makes it a gazelle on a higher end system. While some functions like logging as-applied call for more memory useage, common mapping such as boundaries, sampling or scouting do not need much horsepower, so you can choose a lightweight system if that is your preference.

3. Set up is quick. First time in you tell the system what coordinate and measurement system you prefer and where your GPS is plugged into (what com port, what baud rate) then start a job, give it a filename and tap GO. When you are done tap STOP. If you are ready to leave the job tap FINISH. There is enough other settings to satisfy the need to fancy up the functions with on-screen status for GPS or next sample number, export automatically to shapefile, one tap flag dropping or toggling between 2D (overhead) to 3D (runway) view. But many users are good with filename/go/stop/finish as the only tapping they need to do.

4. Advanced users can setup sophisticated data collection templates complete with customizable pick lists. Scouts can then associate any number of attributes, weed counts, crop stages and observations, soil conditions and comments to any mapped area or point location. These features are easily learned with some pre-season planning and the result is professional output and manageable data. Database templates can be set up to conform with a strict attribute protocol or customized to suit the needs of independent service providers. Automation and control: a perfect pairing.

5. FW Mobile is part of an integrated suite of modules to seamlessly move data in and out of the FW Office products. The record keeping functions have not even been touched on yet and they are worthy in and of themselves; more on that part later. From a mapping perspective only; whether you are interested in basic data compatibility to pull shapefiles in from historical mapping sessions or want to take advantage of the wireless data transfer abilities of the cell/wireless based 'Connected Farm' add-on, FW Mobile has a lot to offer. But the best feature is that you can use FW Mobile with any in-office GIS. The default export format is the ArcView Shapefile which is compatible with all current brands of GIS, so whether you are a FW Office, AgLeader SMS, Summit/Stratus, or Apex user or a researcher/consultant/engineer with access to ArcView/ArcInfo or Mapinfo GIS, FW Mobile is a natural fit.

A parting comment:
The rest of FW Mobile's extensive pedigree comes from the hardware you might choose load it on or the controller you might choose to hook it up to. Loading FW Mobile on a rugged handheld with an integrated camera and GPS launches the crop scout into an even more elegant solution for providing georeferenced information. FW Mobile is the link between location and real time image of insect infestation or nutrient deficiency. FW Mobile works seamlessly with a variety of sensors such as the EM38 and Veris to log soil electrical conductivity readings. And the penultimate function is the bridge between variable rate strategies hatched in the office and the means with which to deliver them to the field with again, any number of popular industry standards including the Raven 440, 660 and more. And for the accuracy aficionados, it can be mated with which ever level of GPS exactitude your application requires: bluetooth, CF Card, integrated, serial port add on; a Coast Guard ol' standby, WAAS, subscription based or RTK differential. The choice is yours and choice is key. While some of the newest tricks in its bag, namely handling georeferenced images and wireless data transfer are relatively new features, FW Mobile has been providing solid data capture and creditable mapping since its inception making it an experienced player in the field.
Simply-Awesome.
Karon