Map Reading Pattern Guide

Turn a pretty map into a ranked list of field questions

SYSTEMATIC MAP-READING WORKFLOW

1. START WHOLE-FIELD

What is the dominant pattern? Does it match topography, soil, or operations?

2. CHECK THE LEGEND

Index, color scale, date, flight conditions, and whether the scale is locked.

3. COMPARE LAYERS

Yield, soil, as-applied, drainage, planting, hybrid/variety, previous imagery.

4. RANK ZONES

Which zones are large enough and timely enough to act on?

5. GROUND-TRUTH

Walk or sample the top zones before spending money.

6. DECIDE + LOG

Action, no action, re-fly, sample, or ask an agronomist.

GUIDING RULE

A drone map is not a diagnosis. It is a list of questions, ranked by urgency, with directions to the answers.

TOP THREE QUESTIONS THIS MAP RAISES

COMMON PATTERNS AND FIRST QUESTIONS

Pattern	First questions to ask
Row-parallel streaks	Planter, fertilizer, sprayer, or applicator pass? Compare direction to field operations.
Low spots / ponding	Drainage, compaction, tile issue, delayed planting, root damage? Fly after rain.
Tile-line pattern	Tile performance, broken tile, soil drying difference, nutrient movement?
Edge effect	Spray drift, deer/wildlife, road dust, trees/shade, compaction at headland?
Circular / turn zones	Grain cart, manure/compaction, old building site, pivot/traffic pattern?
Gradient across field	Soil type, organic matter, elevation, moisture, variety, application gradient?
Random speckles	Sensor noise, weeds, residue, or single-pixel artifact? Do not overreact.
Cloud-shadow shape	If pattern aligns with photo frames or clouds, suspect illumination before crop stress.

ESCALATE WHEN

The pattern is large, repeatable on two flights, matches an economically important decision window, and is confirmed by ground truth.