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**Potatoes Planted In Wheat Stubble Seedbed**

The neighbors were skeptical when they saw researchers planting potatoes in wheat stubble. Although they recognized immediately that eliminating seedbed preparation

would materially reduce production costs, they wondered if it was practical.

It was. ARS agricultural engineer G. W. French and University of Minnesota soil scientist G. R. Blake found that potato yields and quality were about equal in 3-year tests on tilled and conventionally plowed plots.

Plowed plots yielded less than the no-tillage treatment in all but 1 year, when yields on fall-plowed and untilled plots were equal in a season

with high May rainfall.

French and Blake compared five tillage treatments: No tillage (potatoes planted in undisturbed wheat stubble), fall plowing, spring plowing, fall deep tillage, and spring deep tillage.

Their experiments, conducted at the Red River Valley Potato Growers Research Farm near Grand Forks, N. Dak., were on plots that had been

in spring wheat the previous season.

Spring and fall plowing was to a depth of 6 inches, and spring plowing and spring deep tillage were completed 1 to 4 days before planting. Points of the deep chisel plow were spaced 11 inches apart and penetrated the soil 8 to 10 inches.

French reported no difficulty planting directly in stubble in 1961 and 1962. But in 1963 the amount of straw was much greater, and it frequently clogged the furrow-opener disks on the planter and interfered with the first cultivation. The straw did not hinder subsequent cultivations, however.

The no-tillage treatment delayed those plants that normally would have emerged first, French found, but the overall emergence of the crop was not affected.

Cultivation completely controlled weeds on all plots.

Early weed growth was much greater on the unplowed plots, although there was no apparent difference between plots after the second cultivation. The furrow openers and covering disks of the planter removed the weeds in the rows; cultivation eliminated weeds between rows.

The type of tillage did not markedly affect the operation of the potato digger. But both deep tillage and plowing, when done in the spring, seemed to result in more clods, which may be picked up with the potatoes at harvest time.

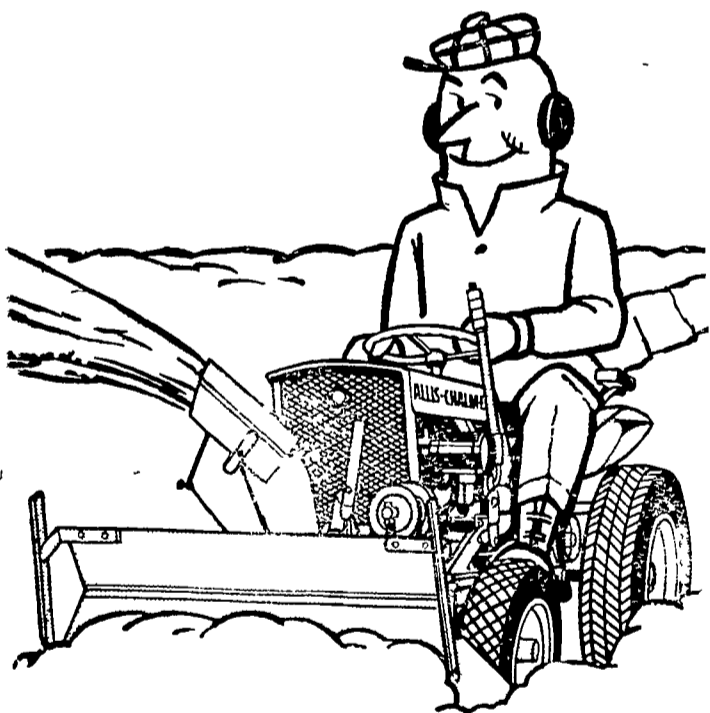
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