

# Farm

(Continued From Page 1)

that haven't been cleared by the government for other than research applications.

Alfalfa is another very important crop in the Center's program, and accounts for the bulk of the forage research. The crop is grown in 5' x 16' plots. A few commercial varieties are tested. Plans are to establish a breeding nursery this year.

Yocum is looking for an answer to the Southern Anthracnose disease which is a problem for local growers. Leaf hopper is another problem that's going to take a lot of research. "Leaf hopper is a problem here because the hoppers can come back even after the second and third cuttings have been sprayed. The sprays we're allowed to use must have a very low residual level. They stop being effective ten days after they're applied, and right now we just don't have a

good way to fight leaf hopper. But we're working on it."

Crown vetch, clover and rye grass are other targets of forage research. One crop that used to be studied for its value as a source of hay is soybeans.

Soybeans have been studied at the Center since 1957. Up until 1965, however, they were studied exclusively as a hay crop. That year, they started evaluating varieties that had been developed by commercial breeders. This year, there will be some 4 acres planted to beans.

Although corn and beans are about equal in value as a cash crop, Yocum doesn't feel that beans will ever replace the many acres of corn grown in this part of the state. Beans take only one-half to two-thirds the investment of corn, mostly because they don't require nearly as much fertilizer. But they're harder to grow, and the corn herbicides are much better than the bean herbicides now available," Yocum said.

Mainly, though, corn will stay around because of its value as a

silage crop. Unless dairy and beef feeding operations drop sharply, Yocum expects corn to be around for a long, long time.

Beans may have an excellent potential locally in a double cropping pattern. For example, barley removed from a field around July can be followed profitably by soybeans. Beans work better than short season corn, Yocum feels, because the corn is more apt to develop rootworm problems.

Muskmelon and sweet corn are two of the vegetable crops under investigation at the Center. And wine grapes are going to be studied extensively in the years ahead.

"Wine grapes could boom in this area," Yocum said, "and I think we're going to see the day when grapes could be as important to Lancaster County as tobacco is now. Grapes are a lot of work, but the labor isn't the kind of back breaking work you get with tobacco. And it takes three years after planting to get

the first crop, but after that a farmer can gross \$1000 an acre with grapes."

Besides crop research, management techniques come in for study at the Center. One of the most important right now is no-till planting. On land subject to erosion, Yocum said he feels no-till is the only way to go.

In the Center's program, paraquat is used to kill the ground cover, and then a crop, usually corn, is planted directly into the stubble, with minimum soil disturbance. Yocum pointed out that no-till uses about the same amount and kind of chemicals as conventional planting methods. But the chemicals stay on the soil until they lose their potency. Paraquat, for example, is a very non-persistent agent.

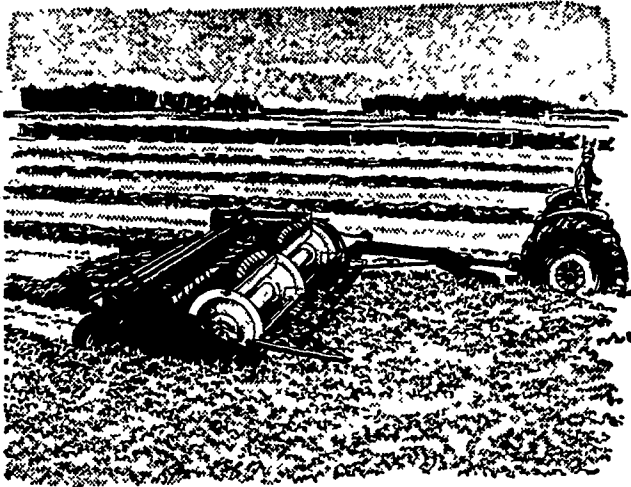
No-till crops being researched are corn, soybeans, alfalfa and wheat. This year, Yocum said they'll be experimenting with a no-till field that will be planted to corn in the spring, followed by a wheat crop in the summer, followed by an alfalfa seeding in late fall. Each crop will be planted without plowing.

No-till should be very useful, Yocum said, in reestablishing legumes in pastures without plowing up the whole pasture.

This year, comparison yield checks will be run on fields planted to no-till and conventional till. Yocum expects that yields will be about the same on sloping fields, but on flat lands, he expects that the conventional till fields will do marginally better. "The problem with no-till on flat lands is that we just can't get quite the populations we get with conventional till," Yocum said. "It could be just a mechanical problem with setting the planters properly, or it could be that we just don't know enough about planting needs for no-till. Its a problem I think we're going to lick, though."

Yocum also said that he feels no-till planting along with contour strip cropping might enable some farmers to meet a 1977 government deadline for controlling runoff from their fields. He said terraces and waterways might not be needed on farms with gently sloping fields. He pointed out, though, that a farmer who decided to go that route might not be able to plant as many acres in corn as he'd like.

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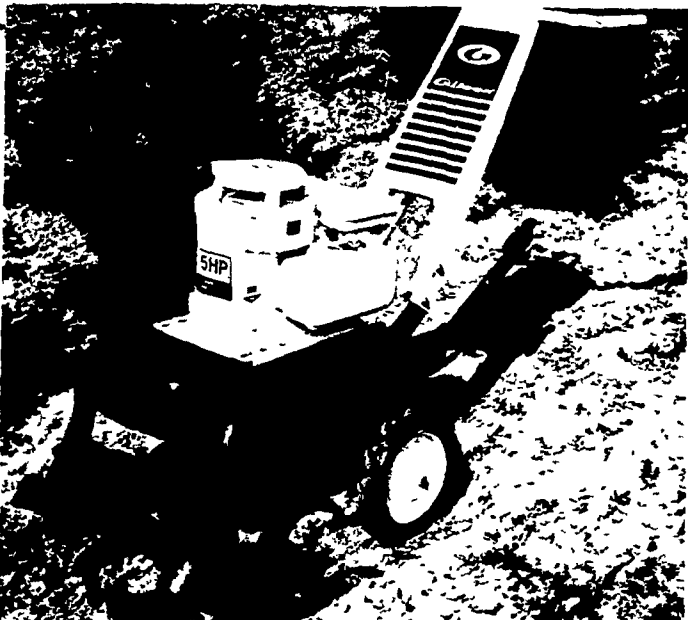
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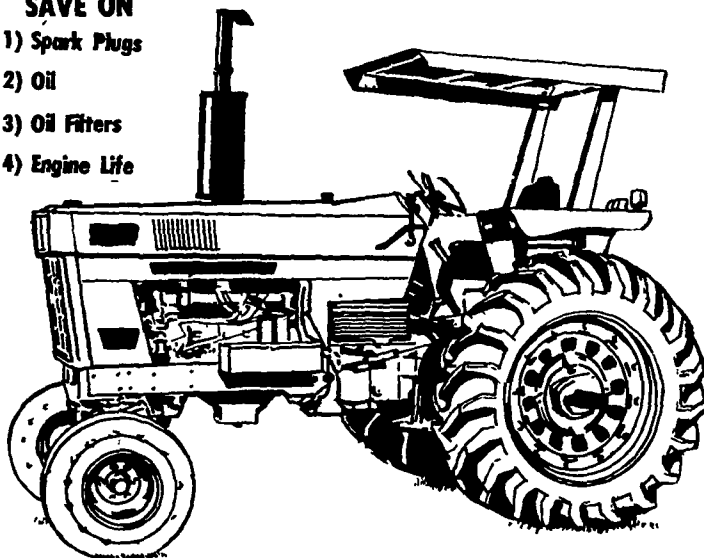
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