

# Lebanon County Growers Tour No-till Corn Fields

Corn growers from Lebanon and Lancaster counties had a close look at an unconventional method of growing corn this week. A tour of six Lebanon County farms, sponsored jointly by the Lebanon County Agricultural Extension Service, the Lebanon Soil Conservation District and representatives of the Chevron Chemical company, attracted approximately 40 farmers.

Known as "no-till" or zero-tillage corn, this novel cultural method uses a special planter that needs no soil preparation other than that provided by the planter itself. A sturdily built machine, it opens a furrow with a fluted coulter, plants the seed and places the fertilizer in the row, then firms the soil around the seed. Herbicides and insecticides can be applied at the same time.

Karl Hellerick, District Soil Conservationist, sees the no-till method of corn growing as a

prime means of controlling soil erosion, especially in Lebanon County where large crop areas are plowed up and planted in corn year after year. "With the No-till method, the soil is not torn up each year, a cover crop or mulch is maintained on the surface, and the rich topsoil remains on the surface where it belongs". Mr. Hellerick pointed out several examples of this soil saving feature where no-till corn was planted near conventionally planted corn. There was noticeably less erosion on the no-till field, and the soil was firmer, even following the recent four-inch rainfall. Heavy machinery was seen harvesting corn on these fields, while nearby plowed fields were still too wet to support this equipment.

Chemical herbicides are an essential part of the no-till corn program. At planting time, all green and growing vegetation is

killed with Paraquat, a non-residue forming herbicide. John Henszey, field representative for the Chevron Chemical Company, Ortho division, which distributes Paraquat, pointed out the importance of properly identifying any weed or cover vegetation problems so that the correct herbicide combinations can be used. Fall Panicum, a grassy weed, was seen as a major weed problem in some of the fields on the tour. "You must have the residual herbicides such as Lasso or Princep in the soil before Panicum germinates — once it is up, nothing will control it." Except for this grass, the no-till corn fields were relatively free of weeds.

Penn State Agronomist Willis McClellan noted that Pennsylvania had 300,000 acres planted in no-till corn this year. He predicted that 60 percent to 65 percent of all corn planted in Pennsylvania within five years, would be no-till. McClellan urged farmers to order all of their fertilizer needs for next spring as

soon as possible, since supplies are limited. He said that mixed fertilizers can be safely applied to the soil this fall and winter, after the soil temperatures drop below 50 degrees. However, only ammoniated forms of nitrogen fertilizers should be applied during the winter, to prevent losses.

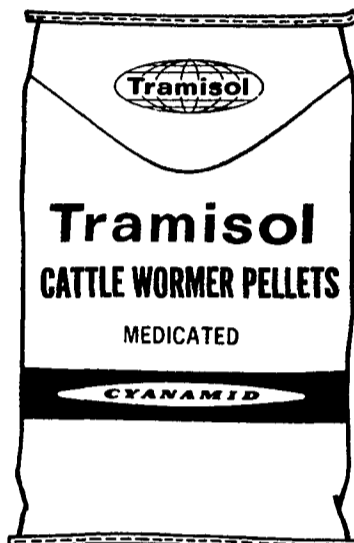
Two separate tours of Lebanon County farms were offered corn growers. The morning tour featured farms in the Schaeferstown area and included fields on the farms of Elmer Rohrer, Luke Patches and John Hartman,

In the afternoon, no-till corn fields were visited on the farms of John Landis, Henry Meyer and Lawson Hemperly, all in the Annville area. Coordinator of the event was Lebanon Assistant County Agent Newton Bair, who commented, "These corn growers are innovators, willing to try new methods and make them work. We are not ready to say that everyone should go to no-till corn, but we should consider the advantages in soil conservation, and also time and power savings. We are ready for more of it in Lebanon County".

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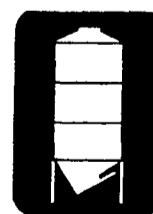
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