



Four Farmers

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manure covered ground, in Koons experience, is to get the planter coulter through the resulting crust. An avid believer of proper acidity levels to make no-till work, Koons aims at spreading a ton or more of lime annually on all corn ground acres.

Machinery innovation is a major interest of the Lippy Brothers of Carroll County, Maryland. Donald Lippy of Hampstead detailed with slides the no-till planter improvements they've devised, working with the John Deere Company. Lippy Brothers plant 7,000 acres, with 5,000 in corn, and double cropping the rest in small

grains, soybeans and snap beans.

They began no-tilling about 100 acres ten years ago with a rented four-row Allis-Chalmers planter, switched the next year to a six-row John Deere for 600 acres and have been increasing acreage and devising improvements ever since. Equipment revisions have included independent experimental coulters, the replacement of rubber press wheels with cast and various supplement weight techniques.

Final speaker from the farm segment was Maryland state Senator James Clark, Jr., who with his son

operates a 120-cow, 18,000 pound dairy herd in Howard County. Clark, a no-till enthusiast who confesses "I always hated to plow," is a front runner in the race for perfecting on-farm alcohol.

Senator Clark went into experimental alcohol production about a year ago with a home-built still devised from a collection of farm castoffs.

An outdated 400-gallon milk tank serves as the fermenting tank, where finely ground corn is mixed with water, heated, cooled to

90 degrees and started into the fermentation process with the addition of yeast and enzymes. When the alcohol content in the mixture reaches about ten percent, after roughly 70 hours of fermentation, the

yeast is destroyed. Boiling then causes the alcohol vapors to rise into a reflux column, a five-inch diameter pipe (because that's the size he could get for nothin, Clark notes), and condenses as the finished distillate into an old 275-gallon fuel oil tank. Water in the solution condenses lower in the pipe and falls back down into the fermentation tank.

Clark's efforts after a year of experimentations now net him approximately three to three and one-half gallons of 170 proof alcohol per bushel of corn, plus a high protein brewers mash that both cattle and hogs relish. Corn, because of its availability year-round, is the logical base ingredient, although Clark has tried sugar beets and even pears. He foresees greater success in future years by modification of machines to run on straight alcohol, rather than with the blending of gasoline for gasohol. Alcohol, he noted, can also be used in home heating systems with the modification of a larger fuel injection nozzle.

"It's a step toward more self-sufficiency for farmers and a way of guaranteeing themselves that fuels will be available," believes the senator farmer. "And while it may not be economical today, it will be someday at whatever it costs, if traditional fuels become unavailable."

For the first time on record, less than half of the people directly employed in U.S. agriculture actually lived on farms in 1978, according to Sperry New Holland.

"You'll be shocked at what your fertilizer will cost," warned Edwin Wheeler, president of the Fertilizer Institute and a featured speaker at the Mid-Atlantic No-Till conference.

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