

Md. farmer speaks up for no-till

LANCASTER — "The introduction of the no-till drill will have as much an impact on farming in the years ahead as the no-till concept itself," said Ken Stonesifer of Keyville, Carroll County, Maryland. Stonesifer was a member of a three-farmer panel at the 7th Annual Mid-Atlantic No-Till Conference, held here recently.

A grain farmer and former no-till farmer consultant, Stonesifer continued:

"At least a decade in developing, the no-till drill is or will be the missing link in the no-till cropping chain. It is now possible to plant virtually all field crops and most vegetable crops without major soil disruption or removal of surface vegetation.

"I don't mean to mislead you with my enthusiasm. More work needs to be done to further refine the drills now available and as new chemicals are released, we will need to know how to best use all the tools at our disposal to maximize net profits.

"I have tried to keep abreast of the no-till drill market for about six years. I have seen many successes and many failures, but each year was more encouraging than the year before.

"Last spring I decided to invest in my first drill.

"My requirements for a piece of equipment are quite different from a family farm operation. Because I do a lot of custom planting, I encounter varying soil types from beach sands to compacted clays. Stones and ditches are everyday occurrences as are small fields

and unusual, unexpected cover crops.

"My equipment must be structurally strong enough to withstand the unexpected, versatile enough to plant nearly all seeds regardless of size or condition, easy to calibrate and change seeding rates, and be capable of travelling 10-40 miles per day on public highways with a minimum of lost time between jobs.

"Aside from brand named and individual peculiarities, I foresee a farming revolution about to take place.

"Until the refinement of a no-till solid-stand seeder, the farmer who used the no-till concept was either restricted to cow crop farming or forced to return to

the dreaded tillage tool for establishment of non-rowed crops. He was obligated to own a myriad of land preparatory equipment and make additional provisions for labor or if a crop rotation was desirable, expose the naked soil to the whims of wind and water for periods of a few weeks to several months.

"To avoid this type of land abuse in a continuous corn culture, I have had cover crops flown on by plane or spun on with a fan-type spreader. Sometimes I had good stands, other times poor. Regardless of seeding rate, good stands can not be attained without seed contacting moist soil.

"I used to use 100 to 150

lbs. of rye seed per acre to establish acceptable covers. This year, by placing the seed in soil with the drill, I got more uniform stands with a greatly reduced

seeding rate. Good stands were achieved in less than two weeks with only one bushel of seed per acre. For comparison, this fall it was nearly a month before small

grains in tilled soils had the same amount of growth.

"The presence of moisture, an insulated environment, and earlier

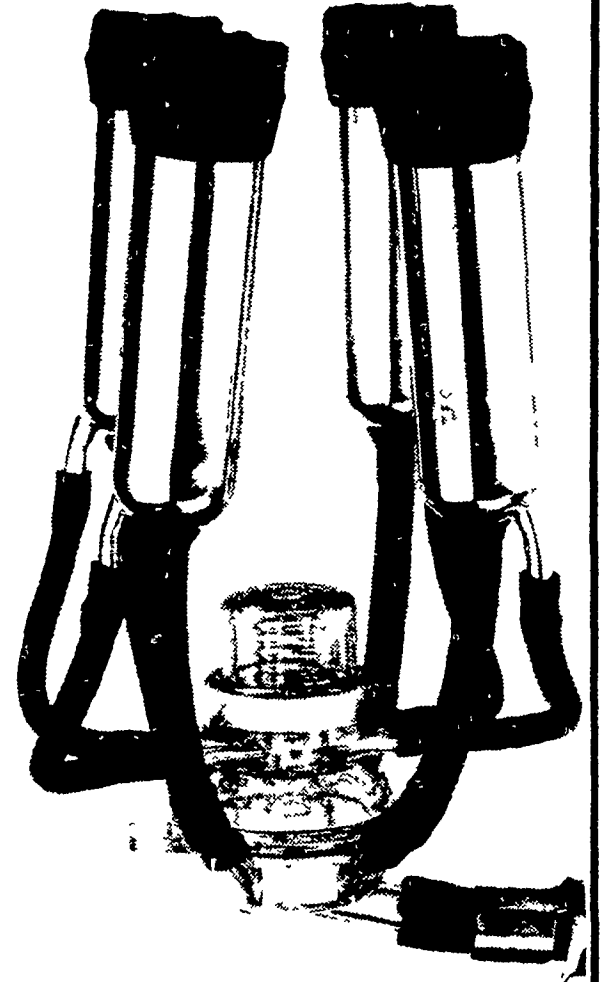
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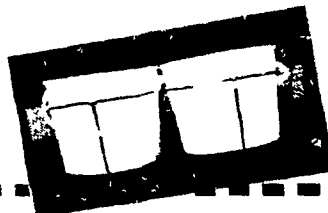
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