

Reduced tillage aids in water conservation

HARRISBURG — During the past five years, the use of minimum and no-till planting has increased significantly.

Reduced tillage has proven effective in reducing erosion; And last year, in those areas with inadequate rainfall, the effect on moisture conservation became evident.

The effectiveness of reduced tillage in conserving water as well as controlling erosion is directly

related to the amount of crop residue left on the land. With corn yields of over 100 bushels per acre, the amount of residue produced can exceed 3 tons per acre. When 60 percent of the residue remains on the surface after minimum tillage and planting, farmers will realize increased infiltration and reduced water losses as a result of mulching effects.

The use of no-till in crop residues

is an ideal practice from the standpoint of water conservation. Since the full amount of residue remains, there will be more than adequate cover for a mulching effect.

If crop residues are removed, especially where row crops are being grown continuously, a mulching effect can be produced by planting a winter cover crop or applying manure.

Crop residues conserve moisture

HARRISBURG — The use of crop residues can be applied in conjunction with other conservation practices, such as strips and contours, diversions and terraces.

Crop residues serve as a mulch to reduce soil moisture losses. They also help to improve water infiltration during a rain storm.

Crop residues include corn stalks, small grain straw and soybean stalks. The effectiveness of these residues depends on how well the material is distributed or spread and whether the residue is left standing or is incorporated into the soil.

Due to increased costs for straw and bedding materials, many farmers are faced with the decision whether or not to remove crop residue for their own use or for sale. If residues are removed, especially where continuous row crops are grown, similar benefits can be achieved by applying

manure or by using a winter cover crop. Mulch may be more essential

on soils that are occasionally subject to drought.

Erosion threatens productivity

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Each year, more than 6.4 billion tons of soil erode from the nation's farmland and other nonfederal lands.

"In many areas, the rate of erosion seriously threatens long-term agricultural productivity," said Norman A. Berg, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service. "We have unacceptable erosion rates on more than 140 million acres of cropland."

Berg said erosion rates exceed acceptable levels on more than 295 million acres of cropland, pastureland, forest land, and

rangeland. Scientists consider erosion tolerable when eroded topsoil can be replenished through natural processes.

Of the more than 6.4 billion tons of soil losses from wind and water erosion each year, more than 5 billion tons erode from agricultural land, Berg said. Some 1.1 billion more tons erode from streambanks, gullies, construction sites, roads and roadsides.

Sediment, the greatest single water pollutant by volume, is an end product of soil erosion, Berg added.



Reduced tillage, such as that used on the Aaron Hoffer farm in Middletown, in conjunction with the use of crop residues can increase soil moisture by 19 percent, according to a Soil Conservation Service spokesman.

Aquaculture Act calls for plan

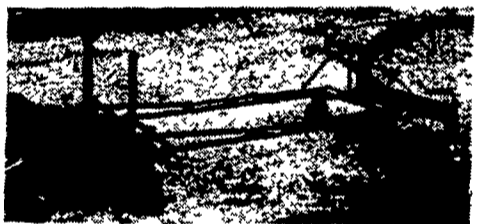
COLLEGE PARK, Md. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture is currently cooperating with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of the Interior in a joint subcommittee responsible for establishment of a National Aquaculture Plan, as specified in Public Law 96-382, signed last September by former President Carter.

Several other federal agencies — 14 in all — are also represented on the joint subcommittee for aquaculture, including the Farm Credit Administration

The subcommittee has a mandate to have its National Aquaculture Plan ready within 18 months from last September. Opportunity is provided for public comment during the plan development. A preliminary report is due on September 1, 1981.

Under the new program, it is expected that the U.S. Department of Agriculture will have sole or partial responsibilities for catfish, crawfish, baitfish and trout production in aquaculture activities.

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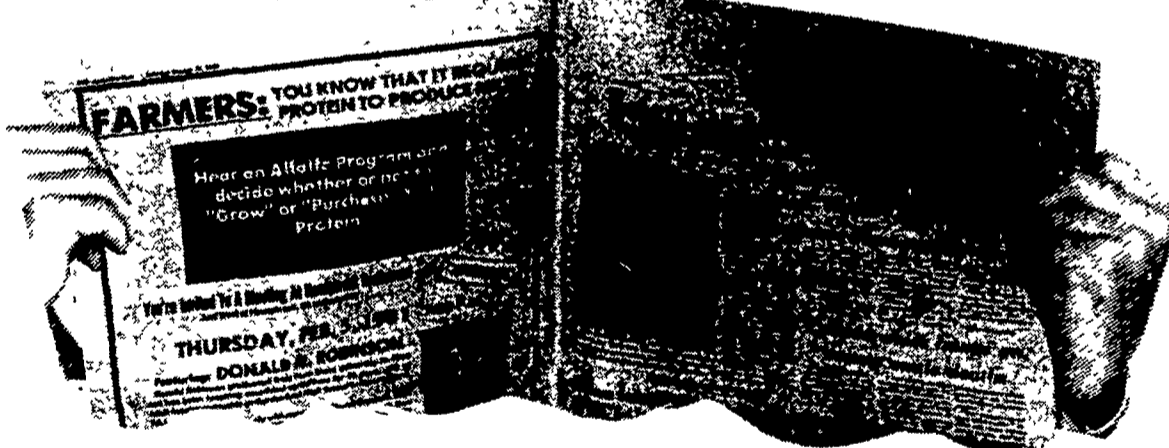
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