

More Del. farmers try no-till

NEWARK, Dela. — There's been a significant increase in no-till corn acreage throughout Delaware this year.

Nearly 30-35 percent of the state's approximately 190,000-acre corn crop was planted without cultivation this spring, estimates University of Delaware Extension crops specialist Frank Webb. This is up from about 10 percent last year.

The rapid shift to this method of farming is the result of a number of things, says Webb—for one, the performance of no-till corn on neighboring farms in 1980.

"Last year was extremely dry and many no-tillage plots yielded significantly better than conventionally grown corn. This impressed farmers," Webb observes.

Besides reducing moisture stress, no-till has other advantages as a time and labor saver. The technique uses less fuel by reducing the number of passages over a field, so it has definite cost benefits.

"All these factors considered," he says, "I think farmers were in a frame of mind to want to try the new production system."

No-till isn't exactly new. It's been around Delaware since the early 1970's. But it wasn't until after Extension specialists put together what they call their no-till corn "recipe" around 1977 that the system started to catch hold on local farms.

Overall, Webb says he thinks this year's no-till corn plantings have been successful. In most instances, farmers new to the technique apparently followed recommended procedures fairly closely.

"When the crops came up this

year, most of the no-till plantings were more uniform and had fewer problems than many of the conventional ones," he says.

This doesn't mean no-till was entirely without problems, however. Where Webb did see poor stands, they were often associated with low soil temperatures.

During the normal corn planting period for Delaware this spring, the weather was unusually cool. Because the ground wasn't worked up, the soil in no-till plantings stayed considerably colder than that on plowed land. Under this stress, some corn seed had trouble germinating.

"It certainly showed up the difference in emergence vigor of different hybrids," says Webb. Conventionally planted corn had similar problems, but not to the same degree.

Even so, most no-till stands around the state look extremely good right now, he says. A few fields are showing signs of nitrogen deficiency—apparently because some farmers new to no-till misunderstood instructions they received regarding application of 30-percent liquid nitrogen.

"We advise growers not to apply liquid N with the herbicide to be sprayed on the no-till surface either before or just after planting," he explains. "I think some farmers misinterpreted this advice when it came to the later side-dressed application that's recommended especially for no-till corn."

"Then, 30-percent liquid N can be dribbled—not sprayed—on the soil surface in a band between the rows. Many farmers want to knife this in," he notes, "but there's no research data to indicate you'll get

any greater N efficiency by knifing it in than you will from dribbling it on.

"At present," he says, "we see no real advantage to knifing N solution into the soil. It's much more expensive to do it that way because of the knives that are needed on the applicators. It's also slower."

As the season progresses, Webb says farmers with no-till corn

should keep an eye open for any grass breakthrough problems in their fields. These problems can be handled quite effectively with post-directed sprays of Evik or Lorox. Both materials must be applied with surfactants, but they're effective in controlling escaped grasses in corn. Any broad-leaf weed problems can be handled with applications of Banvel or 2,4-D. Be sure to follow label direc-

tions carefully.

"Other than that, we can just hope for ample rainfall to carry the crop through to harvest," says Webb. "I expect everyone to keep close tabs on all this no-till corn, so we should be able to get a general idea of farmer acceptance at the end of the growing season. That will tell us what to expect in the future in terms of no-till corn acreage in Delaware."

Delaware holds irrigation field days

NEWARK, Del. — The function of an irrigation system is to apply water uniformly and at a rate less than the soil's intake rate so there is no runoff. This seems straightforward enough, but rarely is perfect distribution uniformity achieved.

The uniformity and application rates on continuously moving sprinklers are affected by nozzle size; spacing, pressure, and travel speed as well as wind and evaporation.

Farmers can learn some easy methods of evaluating their own center pivot irrigation systems for distribution uniformity, application rate and depth at the irrigation field days that will be held in all three Delaware counties this month.

On Tuesday, July 21, there will be a demonstration at Manning and Louis O'Neal's farm, which is located 2½ miles east of Laurel on Road 466 (Sycamore Road). The

O'Neals have a 5 tower low pressure Valley with corner systems.

On Wednesday, July 22, the second demonstration will be held at Francis Winkler's farm, located 1½ miles north of Harrington on U.S. Route 13. Winkler has an 11 tower Renke Alumigator high pressure center pivot system.

The third and final demonstration will be held on Thursday, July 23, at Don Isaac's farm, located on Route 446 one mile southeast of Middletown. Isaacs has a 5 tower towable low pressure

zimmatic system.

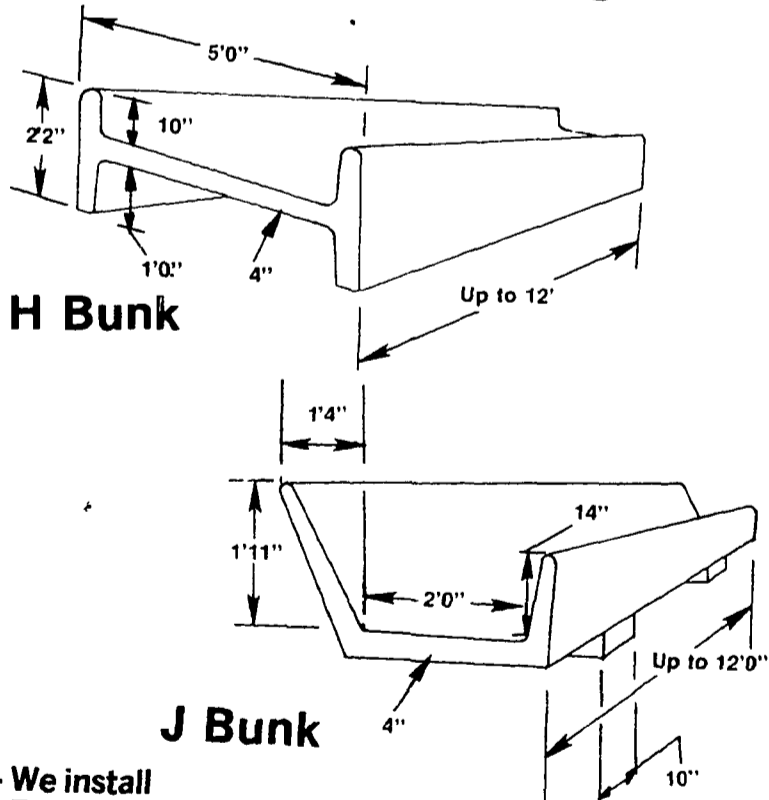
All three field meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will conclude by 9 p.m., rain or shine. Other subjects to be discussed include soil moisture holding capacity, irrigation scheduling, and use of tensiometers. Engineers and agronomists will be available to discuss other topics of interest.

The irrigation field days are sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Delaware, the Soil Conservation Service, and local irrigation dealers.



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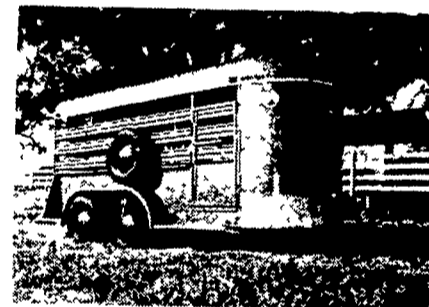
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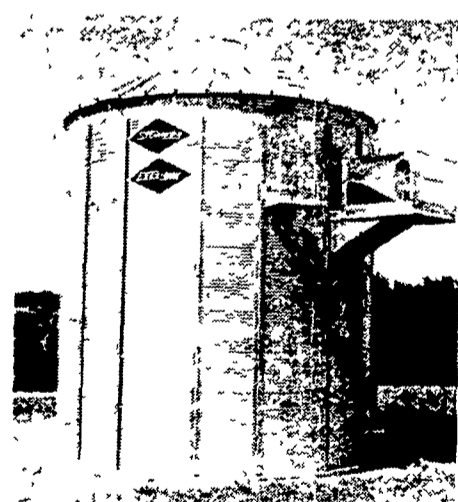
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