

USDA researcher predicts 100% conservation tillage

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A U.S. Department of Agriculture research administrator predicts the virtually all U.S. cropland will be farmed under some form of conservation tillage by the end of this century.

That prediction comes from Terry B. Kinney, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, who says in the March issue of Agricultural Research: "Conservation or minimum tillage decidedly is coming of age as scientists, advisors, and farmers smooth out the rough edges on a farm practice that can do more to preserve this Nation's soil and water heritage than any other single practice."

"We should set a goal of applying no-till or ridge till — some form of conservation tillage — on every suitable acre of U.S. cropland by the end of the century. I predict this Nation's agricultural community will achieve that goal."

"A few years ago," Kinney says,

"most farmers wouldn't hear of tillage methods that left residue on the top of the soil. They opted for clean plowing, turning all crop residue under with moldboard and disk plows, a practice that produces maximum rates of erosion."

"Now the Department's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) says that about 100 million acres, nearly a fourth of U.S. cropland, is minimum tilled or not tilled in cropping systems."

Kinney says the upsurge in farmer interest in stimulated largely by reduced fuel and labor costs, but also by research progress, education, and farmer experience. "Farmers are demonstrating for themselves and others that minimum or no-till practices do improve soil and water conservation while maintaining, even increasing, crop yields where implemented properly."

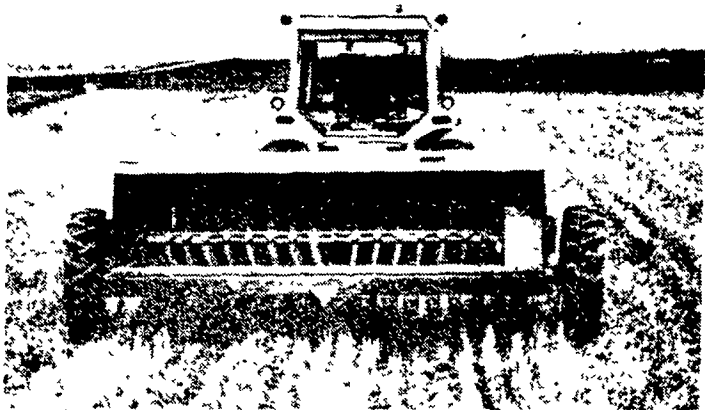
He refers to forms of con-

servation tillage that minimize or eliminate tillage and leave crop residues on the soil surface where

they will normally help reduce soil and water losses. Grain or oilseed crops then are planted with the least possible disturbance of the residue.

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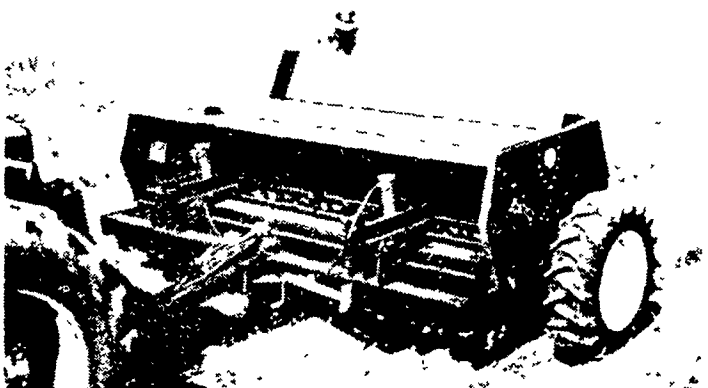


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