

Product development

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drawn from the fields of academia, environment and government, to review the EPA's work and conclusions. That would eliminate the misuse of confidential data, and would also eliminate the very problematic misinterpretation of data which can occur when taken out of context by non-scientific people."

Yet another area of concern voiced by Voepel was that of existing patent legislation.

"When this nation's patent laws were first enacted many decades ago, they provided for a company to have 17 years of patent protection after the product had been introduced.

Loss of years

"In our industry today, however, because of the very long process required to develop and test new chemical or drug products before the federal regulatory authorities will grant commercial usage, the manufacturer loses an average of 7 years of patent protection before it can begin marketing the product.

"There is currently proposed legislation now before the House which would grant a 7-year extension for a patent to offset that time lost from delays caused by federal regulations. Hearings on this proposed legislation are now being scheduled, and we as an industry ask that all agricultural organizations voice their support for this important revision in Federal law."

Finally, Voepel pointed to the complex issue of public image as one which agriculture, and the agricultural industry, must resolve together.

He stated, "Despite the fact that our industry is under the closest possible scrutiny by Federal authorities, and despite the fact that agriculture is today doing a remarkably good job of using pesticide products safely and efficiently, we continue to see a steady deterioration of the public opinion toward scientific

agriculture and advanced food technology.

"Organizations like the National Agricultural Chemicals Association continue to work to better educate the public about the roles and proper use of agricultural chemicals. But we must do more. Some of the environmental organizations which oppose the use of pesticides have budgets far in excess of our own association resources, and are using those budgets and their voices to measurably affect legislative actions. Consider, for example, that environmentalist support has helped to elect 34 of the 48 congressional candidates those groups have recently supported."

Examine politics

Voepel suggested that all elements of agriculture must step up educational efforts to inform the public about the proper role of pesticides in U.S. agriculture. But, he added, it is equally important to also examine the situation from the political side, and learn how to positively influence the political process.

"We cannot achieve these goals alone, but must stand united as an industry," he stated. "As an example of what can be accomplished, consider the alliance of 34 industry, farm, user and

Ridge-till system gains acceptance

LANCASTER — The ridge-till system for growing row crops is finding a home on more farms each year. Farmers are finding it to be a workable and satisfactory system with significant economic benefits. Each year of research and experience eliminates more of

agribusiness groups which recently stood together during the FIFRA hearings, and were jointly successful in helping to defeat the Harkin bill."

Voepel added that the NACA has now developed a position paper on alliances which will be presented to its board early in 1984. That paper will seek to further joint action by various elements of agriculture and agribusiness at the legislative level.

"The outlook for agriculture is optimistic, to be sure," Voepel concluded. "And with the continued development of new technology to support increased agricultural productivity, this nation's agricultural industry will rise to meet the growing world demand for food and fiber.

"But we must stand and work together. To master the tasks ahead of us we must depend on mutual cooperation."

the theorized pitfalls or disadvantages.

One of the first theorized disadvantages of ridge-till was loss of yield. Recent statistics from the University of Minnesota show conventional tillage, chisel-reduced tillage and ridge-till all produced about the same yield level of corn and soybeans on a multiple year average. These tests were run with a good annual fertility program.

Another theorized disadvantage was poor weed control. Many "ridge tillers," as these farmers liked to be called, indicate this is not true. In fact, most feel it is easier to control weeds with ridges than with conventional tillage. Most "ridgers" in the upper midwest can control weeds with less herbicide by band application at planting, plus cultivation. With ridge-till, the undisturbed soil between rows along with previous crop residue left on the soil surface, proves to be a poor environment for weed growth.

A third theorized disadvantage was that insects would flock to the less tilled fields. University of Illinois studies indicate that no-till fields had no more, and in some cases less, corn rootworm damage than conventional tillage programs. The comparison proved

the same where insecticides were used and not used.

A fourth theorized disadvantage said cold soil temperature would be associated with crop residue and no tillage prior to planting. A good ridge constructed last summer corrects this potential disadvantage. The residue works its way off the ridge through the fall and winter, allowing the sun to warm the ridge surface. Soil temperature of the ridge is about equal to and sometimes higher than with conventional tillage.

Ridge-till, like every other tillage method, does not eliminate all production problems. The very wet conditions last spring presented a problem. Many emergency methods were tried by farmers. One simple but very effective method used by some ridge tillers was the use of a rotary hoe to punch holes and dry the soil so planting could be done.

In summary, it seems that ridge-till is proving to be what some of the earlier proponents such as Ernie Behn claimed. It is a soil and moisture conservation tillage program which produces good yields with lower input costs of time, fuel and machinery. There will be many more people switching to the ridge-till tillage method in the next five years.

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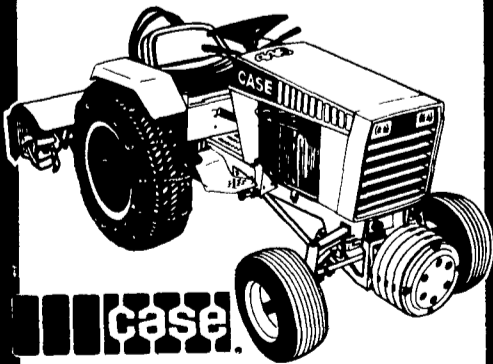
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