

Minnesota farmers visit Lancaster County

BY GLENN B. KNIGHT
LITITZ — Minnesota and Lancaster County farmers have a lot in common. They both complain about high taxes and they both eagerly devour shoo-fly pie while

admitting that it can't be good for the waist-line. Thirty-nine Minnesota farmers, mostly retired, had an opportunity to compare attitudes and techniques with their Dutch



Fay Ness, Thief River Falls, Minn., tries her hand at the antique organ in the lobby of the General Sutter Inn, Lititz, during visit by the Minnesota Farmers Union last Saturday. Behind her, from the left, are Paul Kline, Brunnerville poultryman; Fay's husband, Harvey; and Ray and Lydia Olesiak, Sawyer, Minn.



Manheim goat farmers Jane and Jake Fisher, left, discuss Pennsylvania Dutch customs with Al and Helen Strohschein, Cambridge, Minn., during visit to Lancaster County last weekend.

Country brothers during a visit here last week. This was the seventh year that the Minnesota Farmers Union sponsored a bus trip to Lancaster County and the seventh opportunity for Forney Longenecker to serve as the local host.

"I get the feeling that in our three days here we will only get to touch the frosting," voiced

Glenace Fredrickson of Granite Falls, Minn., "there is just so much diversity in Lancaster County."

The most prevalent comments made over the noon meal Saturday at the General Sutter Inn in Lititz were the size of the farms and the complete use of all available land.

Harry Stenberg and his wife, Evelyn, work a 160 acre farm near

the Inidan reservation at Bemidji, Minn. and call it a small farm. "Anthing less and you ain't farmin'," he stated. His neighbor's farm covers 2,000 acres of the Gopher State.

"Back home you seldom see your neighbor, but here everything seems so close together," reported Lydia Olesiak of Sawyer, Minn.

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Chester holds no-till session

COCHRANVILLE — Over 80 farmers attended the information session on no-till crop planting at the Stoltzfus Farm Service, Cochranville, last week. Information presented covered pesticides, management, equipment usage, and rental programs for a White Seed Boss no-till planter.

John Stoltzfus, and White Equipment are making a rental planter available so that farmers can try no-till planting without having to invest in equipment. The program was started last year in cooperation with the Conservation District and the Extension Service of Chester County. Last year, nearly 300 acres were planted no-till as a result of the program. Stoltzfus indicated that farmers have already reserved the planter for about 250 acres. It is expected that acreage will exceed that of 1983. Custom operators are also providing no-till planting for farmers who want to try before they buy.

Steve Fisher, Oley, FMC Area Representative, gave descriptions of what to look for concerning insect damage. "Insect damage can be controlled. Under some conditions, systemic insecticides may need help from other chemicals", Fisher said. He said that most soybeans are double-cropped. However, some farmers are single planting soybeans. The cover crop is killed back in May. Soybeans are then no-tilled.

"With no-till drills and a single seed box, the systemic insecticide can be mixed with the seed. With double seed boxes, the seed can be applied from one box and the insecticide from the second box", Fisher said. He expects that more crops will be planted with drills as they are improved.

"When no-tilling alfalfa", Fisher said, "It is important to prepare the field the year before. Broadleaf weeds should be brought under control. Wheel marks, ruts and eroded gulleys need to be

smoothed out for the alfalfa crop. No farmer wants a rough field for alfalfa harvest."

J. Omar Stoltzfus, Stoltzfus Spray Service, Oxford, said that "there are positives, negatives and realities with no-till farming." He emphasized management, and "walk your fields weekly until the plants are 15 to 18 inches tall. Look for insect damage. Check for spot control of weeds. Organic content is important, pH is important. The best control for rye cover crop is achieved if it is sprayed before it is 24 inches tall."

He warned farmers, "if you are going to no-till, forget the disc. The disc aerates the soil. If the soil is fluffed up with no rain, it dries out. There may not be enough moisture to germinate the seed."

Stoltzfus congratulated those attending the meeting for taking the proper approach. "Look before you leap—understand what your choices are. Don't forget to think. Use your pencil to compare costs and approaches", he concluded.

"No-till started out several years ago with a great deal of interest", Richard Breckbill, Oxford, Agway Field Rep. told the audience. "Then interest died down. The last couple of years has seen improved planting equipment and techniques. Insecticides and herbicides have been developed. We have learned more about the proper use of the tools the weed control and insect control."

He reemphasized the need for management. The selection of seed varieties, proper selection of insecticides and herbicides along with the timing of pesticide applications for maximum effectiveness.

Ken Stonefiller, Stillpond, Md., let off the three-member panel of no-till users. "I live on Chesapeake Bay. There is no question that here has been a reduction in fish and shell fish production. Individual farmers should make sure that they are not contributing to the alleged agricultural pollution of the bay. No-till cropping will assist in reducing any contribution from

agriculture", Sonefifer said.

He has been planting no-till since 1974 and is now 100% no-till cropping. Over the years, he has planted 22 different crops no-till. He is a consultant and has worked with farmers no their no-till programs in several states.

William Farrel, Uwchland, plants 1200 acres of no-till corn each year. He has planted no-till in corn stalks and has a yield of 200 bushels per acre.

Farrel plans to use ridge planting in 1984. He will be planting on the ridges from the year before. He plans modifications of his White planter. "I want to improve fertilizer placement. The fertilizer should be below the seed. This year, the nitrogen will be applied 9-10 inches from the seed row", he said. He tries to keep nitrogen application out of the dry residue. He also emphasized that fodder will tie up nitrogen.

Charles Harris, Cochranville, planted 12 acres of no-till corn last year for the first time. "Even though 1983 was a dry year, the no-till seemed to take advantage of whatever moisture was available," he said. "I didn't have the plant population that I would have liked, but I feel that the no-till yielded just as much and perhaps more than my conventional tillage corn."

Harris collected soil samples for nutrient testing before planting. "The tests called for nitrogen. It was applied with the insecticides and herbicides", Harris explained.

Steve Fenton, Ephrata, White Representative, explained the various adjustments of the White planter. Farmers renting the planter would be provided with further information and instructions when they are ready to use the machine.

Farrel had spent several weeks this winter with his nephew and brother in Brazil. He related some of his observations and experiences from his visit. "The relative plant 6000 acres of soy beans and 4000 acres of corn no-till. They follow these crops with

sorghum to utilize any left over fertilizer. Corn was selling for \$4. a bushel. Most of the corn and soybeans are used in Brazil. Land is selling for about \$40. and acre. It has to be cleared. This is not difficult since it is covered primarily

with small brush. It can be put into production immediately. The American farmer has a tremendous knowledge of crop production and machinery usage which can be applied in this virgin area", Farrel reported.



Discussing no-till planting at information session at Cochranville are, from the left, Harvey Chase, Lincoln University; Ken Stonesifer, Stillpond, Md.; Jenny Russell, Vice Chairman, Chester Conservation District; and Ed Scott, Malvern.



Adjustments for no-till corn planter are reviewed by, from the left, Steve Fenton, White fieldman; William Ferrel, Uwchland; J. Brown, Landenberg; John Stoltzfus, Cochranville; and James March, West Grove.