

How to select no-till corn

DEKALB, IL. — Popular opinion suggests that some corn hybrids are adapted to no-till farming while others are not. Research indicates that the best hybrids in conventional systems will be the best hybrids in no-till systems says Greg St. Clair, Regional Agronomist for DEKALB-PFIZER GENETICS.

"Regardless of tillage practice, good hybrids have high yield ability, fast drydown, and strong stalks and roots," he states. "They also have increased stay green, insect resistance, strong seedling vigor, and good drought tolerance."

It is commonly felt that hybrids with the best seedling vigor are the only hybrids to select for no-till. The agronomist points out there isn't much of a correlation between fast seedling vigor and high yields. "There is a strong relationship between final stands and high yield."

It's a common mistake to equate vigor with emergence St. Clair adds. The two terms do not measure the same characteristics. Vigor is a visual rating of the rate at which hybrid seedlings are growing. Emergence is a measurement of the seeds that have germinated and grown above

ground. "It is not uncommon to have a hybrid with only average seedling vigor but high over-all emergence," the specialist observes. "They all come up, but just a little slower."

The converse can also be true: a hybrid can have extremely strong seedling vigor but low over-all emergence. This gets into a matter of seed quality and seed company quality assurance methods. These are much more critical to a successful stand than seedling vigor alone.

"It should also be noted that the longer a seed lies in the soil, under adverse conditions, the greater the chance for insects and pathogens to attack it" states the agronomist. Therefore, a seed-protecting insecticide/fungicide containing diazinon, lindane and captan should be used to guard your seed investment.

The key is knowing the individual hybrid's strengths and weaknesses St. Clair continues. A hybrid with rapid seedling vigor in cooler wet soils should be considered a positive trait under no-till and early planting situations. Obviously this doesn't mean that hybrids with only the best possible seedling vigor should be selected for no-till at the exclusion of other

traits.

If a hybrid is rated as slow in seedling vigor, but all other traits are very desirable, it still could be an excellent choice for no-till. The DEKALB-PFIZER specialist advises farmers to consider the environment into which the seed is being placed. "This hybrid may well benefit from increasing the seed drop to compensate for the possibly higher mortality."

No-till planting into bean stubble usually finds warmer soils than its corn stalk counterpart and may be a good choice for a hybrid with a below-average seedling vigor. St. Clair notes it is also a good practice to hold off planting no-till fields until after conventional fields. This allows additional time for the cooler no-till soils to warm and dry.

"Seed should not be expected to make up for poor management practices. The goal is to obtain sufficient over-all final stand so as not to be a yield limiting factor," the agronomist concludes.

No-till farmers will also need to consider leaf disease resistance. Anthracnose and gray leaf spot are just two of the leaf diseases that are associated with the previous year's corn residue.

Number of dairy farms down

WASHINGTON — Milk Production, one of the nation's leading farm enterprises, is increasingly centered on larger farms with larger herds that produce more milk per cow.

Farm sales of milk and other dairy products amounted to \$16.3 billion in 1982, according to the census of agriculture conducted by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau. This was 12 percent of all agricultural product sales and was from some 10.8 million cows on about 200,000 farms.

The number of farms with 500 or more milk cows grew by 25 percent from 1978 to 1982, and the number of cows on these farms increased by 27 percent.

Farms with milk cows have been decreasing significantly over the years, but the pace has slowed to about 8,500 a year since 1978. From 1940 to 1959 the average drop was 150,000 farms a year.

Milk cows on farms decreased substantially in the 1940s, 1950s,

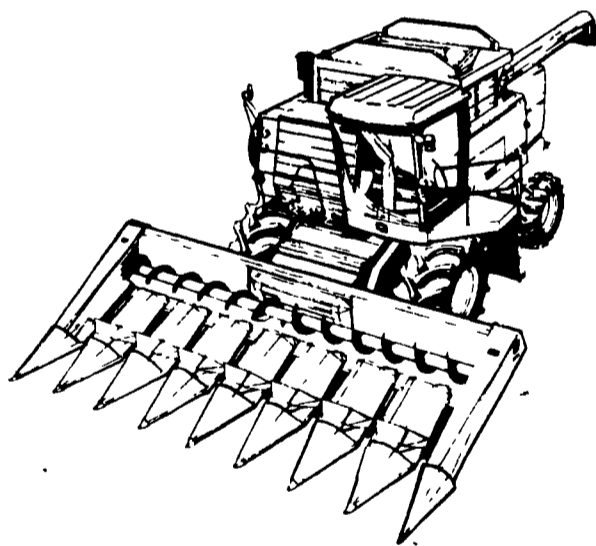
and 1960s, but since then the average has remained relatively stable. Cows per farm, on the other hand, have increased from 5 in 1940 to 39 in 1982.

The trend toward fewer farms producing milk for sale has occurred due to factors in the dairy industry as well as in the general farm economy. In particular, there has been a decrease in the demand for milk coupled with diet changes that have increased milk production per cow. The dairy industry has likewise been affected by the trend in which farm operators have found employment off the farm.

The Census Bureau points out that these data are subject to statistical variability and non-sampling errors. Single copies of Volume I, Geographic Area Series, Summary and State Data, for the United States may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

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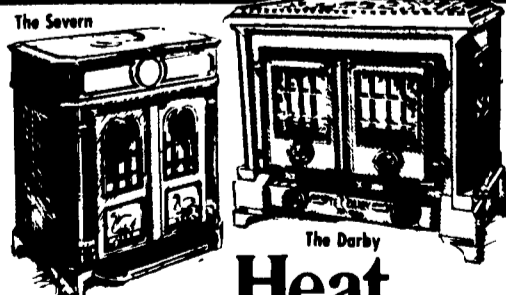
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