Fall Tillage Alternatives

When deciding what fall tillage is necessary your farm, an agronomist suggests considering cost, soil erosion control, and effects on next year's yields. Bill Arndorfer, regional agronomist for DeKalb-Pfizer Genetics, says unless you have a clear reason for performing the tillage operation don't do it.

No-till offers maximum soil protection and least cost, Arndorfer continues. "Conservation tillage offers less soil protection and costs more than no-till but may be necessary on some soils. Conventional tillage offers the least soil protection and most cost but also may be necessary."

No-till requires extra attention management maintain productivity, Arndorfer continues. No-till is strongly recommended for soybean land.

Leaving the soil surface undisturbed will greatly reduce the likelihood of wind and water erosion he says. "Delay tillage operations until spring, unless there is a potential for severe yield reduction with spring tillage

Arndorfer observes chisel plowing and deepdisking are the most common types of conservation tillage used when fall tillage is necessary. Both types

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incorporate up to twothirds of the crop residue but leave the soil surface rough.

The remaining surface residue and roughness help minimize erosion. "Deep chiseling or Vripping can help to break up compaction where it is a problem but should only be performed when fall soil moistures are low," Arndorfer states.

"Moldboard plowing or conventional tillage is primarily practiced only on these soils that are extremely heavy and very slow to warm in the spring," he observes.

Moldboard plowing is not recommended for sloping fields or highly erodable soils Arndorfer continues. Moldboard plowing incorporates nearly 100 per cent of the crop residue leaving the soil surface bare and prone to wind and water erosion

The DeKalb-Pfizer official recommends moldboard plowing after four to five years of no tillage if yields have been declining on that field due to the stratification nutrients.

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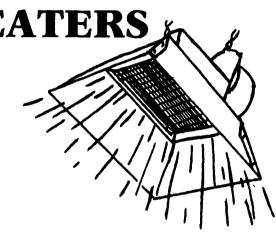
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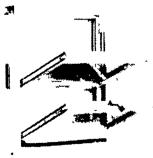
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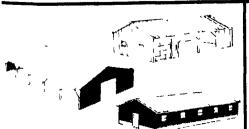
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