

New Cover Crop For Cold Soils

Talk about cold areas in Pennsylvania with short growing seasons and Susquehanna County will be one area mentioned.

Putting a cover crop on the soil after silage corn has been a problem. Regular rye doesn't have time to establish growth before the winter storms. As a result, soil erodes at high rates because of the lack of cover.

However, now there is a new cover crop variety available — Aroostook rye. Aroostook rye was originally developed for cover following potatoes in Maine.

After hearing reports of its success in the cold climate of Maine, personnel of the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the Susquehanna County Conservation District decided it was worth a try.

Test seedings were set up on six farms in 1985-86. The results were so impressive that seeding trials were established on 24 farms this past Fall. SCS conservation technician Bob Wagner, carefully measured growth on all plots in mid November and again in April.

Aroostook rye had up to twice the growth of regular rye. Bob also found that Aroostook survived the winters better and by mid April was several inches taller. Bill Beman, a Brooklyn Township farmer, reported that his Aroostook was twice as high as the regular rye. Bowen Jayne of the same township stated that his Aroostook was twice as thick and on April 14th the Aroostook was five inches high as compared to two inches for regular rye.

John Oyler, SCS Plant Materials

Specialist, adds that Aroostook Rye can grow six inches or more in one week in April. Lenox Township farmer, Jim Zick's rye was six inches high on April 15 and 14 inches on the 30th of April. At the same time, regular rye was five inches and nine inches.

Ron Kays, New Milford Township, had a growth of 13 inches on his Aroostook Rye on May 1. Twenty-eight days later it was 54 inches. His regular rye was seven and 44 inches on the same dates.

Wagner reports that the seeding trials were set up so that Aroostook and regular rye were both planted in the same field on the same soils. Part of the Aroostook rye seed was provided by the Soil Conservation Service plant materials center at Big Flats, New York. The largest portion was purchased by the county conservation district from their non-till planter fund. The conservation district rents no-till seeders to farmers.

Each farmer was given eight bushel of Aroostook Rye seed. The farmer had to provide an equal amount of regular rye.

Method of seeding was up to the farmer. Several methods were used including no-till, broadcast, disking and spreading with manure.

Use of the rye was up to the farmers. Fifteen plowed the rye down for organic matter. Four chopped the rye for silage with one stating that he got one-third more from the Aroostook and two harvested the rye for grain.

SCS District Conservationist, Wayne Ray noted that actual cost to the farmer was low. It cost

\$15.00 per acre to rent the conservation district's no-till planter and the cost share through the Agricultural Conservation Program was \$12.00 per acre.

Wagner sees several advantages to the Aroostook Rye over regular rye. Faster growth, more winter hardy, and more organic matter to plow down. Oyler adds that Aroostook rye exhibit significantly better fall establishment and more horizontal growth for better ground cover. "It improves soil tilth and holds residual fertilizers near the surface for future crops," commented Oyler. "It offers a lot

of potential for potato growers and other vegetable crops as well as silage corn and it does protect the land against erosion."

Sid and Jim Marcy, Lenox Township, can not put manure on some corn fields because they are too distant from the barn. They feel that these fields are low in organic matter. The Marcys say that the Aroostook rye should provide twice organic matter of regular rye when chiseled into the soil.

There is one disadvantage to Aroostook. Wagner says that from his observations, it does not stand very wet conditions as well as reg-

ular rye. Wagner adds that he feels that Aroostook rye should not be planted in fields that are very wet. "From my observation, it does not germinate and grow as well in wet soils".

The seeding trials are not going unnoticed in Susquehanna County. For the first time ever, a seed dealer in the county was unable to meet the demand for Aroostook rye seed as other farmers are adopting the practice. Perhaps it contributed to an item in a large Pennsylvania seed company's newsletter that reported the best year ever for sale of cover crop seed.

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Ice Cream Super Scooper Benefit

The Cumberland County Farmer's Association will hold an ice cream scooper bowl from noon to 9 p.m. today at the Carlisle Plaza Mall, K-Mart entrance.

Ice cream will be sold for 50 cents a scoop. An ice cream-eating contest, prepared by Schwan's of Chambersburg, will be featured at

7:30 p.m.

On hand for this affair will be Patty Dunkleberger, Cumberland County Dairy Princess, Michelle Davidson, alternate and the County's Junior Representatives. Come out and give them your support. Proceeds will benefit the Advanced Life Support System of Carlisle.

Lebanon Area Fairgrounds presents it's Labor Day Weekend **DEMOLITION DERBY**



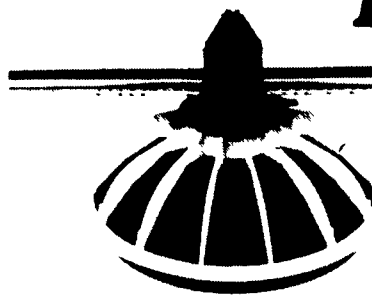
Saturday Evening,
September 5, 1987

7:30 P.M.

To be held at the Lebanon Area Fairgrounds, corner of Rocherty & Cornwall Rds., off Rt. 72 South of Lebanon.

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