

New Developments Make No-Till Attractive

DEKALB, IL. — Many farmers who tried no-tillage in the early sixties and late seventies were convinced "no-till" means "no corn," says Tom Hall, Regional Agronomist for DEKALB-PFIZER GENETICS. "New developments over the last twenty years in equipment, agronomic practices and government policy make no-tillage an attractive management option to reconsider."

A soil conservation plan will be required in order to qualify for government farm programs in the near future. "No-tilling into cover crops and corn residue is an excellent practice to eliminate run off, the cause of most soil erosion, continues the agronomist. This may be the most cost effective method to reduce soil erosion to the accept-

able limits set by USDA's Soil Conservation Service."

No-till corn is cost effective because new agronomic practices and equipment allow the farmer to no-till and not sacrifice yield, according to Hall. Perhaps the biggest improvement has been the change in design of the no-till corn planter.

"Early planters used for no-till were too light to consistently place the seed at the proper depth in the soil," Hall says. Conventional corn planters cannot be made into no-till planters by simply hanging tractor weights on a light frame. More than one farmer in the early seventies gave up on no-till because of poor stands.

Today the Case/IH air planter, John Deere 7000 Conservation or the White 5100 planters all are

capable of placing the seed properly in the soil the agronomist adds. "The operator must do his part to adjust coulters, disc openers and press wheels for the soil conditions."

"A planter that is run in heavy trash should be equipped with trash whippers," Hall continues. "These are two metal wheels, usually located in front of the no-till coulters, that push trash away from the seed furrow so the soil will warm faster and promote earlier seed germination."

The trash whipper should only move trash and not soil. "If the planter is pushing the trash whipper into the soil the balance of the planter is thrown off."

Another necessary considered a must for heavy soils is cast press wheels. Made of heavy iron, these wheels are much more effective in covering the seed than lighter rubber wheels. Hall gives a word of caution. "Since most planters are designed for the lighter press wheels, changing to the heavier wheels may wear out the bearings. Watch for breakage."

In the area of weed control a farmer has three options for the initial burn down, which is critical for good no-till weed control. "Use simazine with other pre-emergence materials early in the spring, before there is any weed emergence," Hall advises. "Or use cyanazine and 2, 4-D when weeds

are small." Liquid nitrogen and a surfactant must be used in conjunction with these materials. The agronomist points out grasses must be less than three inches tall for effective control. Finally, farmers can use a contact herbicide like paraquat or systemic like glyphosate according to the agronomist.

No-till farmers must use the burn down option suitable for the growth stage of the weeds Hall concludes. "This often means changing weed control programs through the season. Also, the tank mixing of atrazine and other materials such as Lasso® or Dual® must be used with the correct burn-down program."

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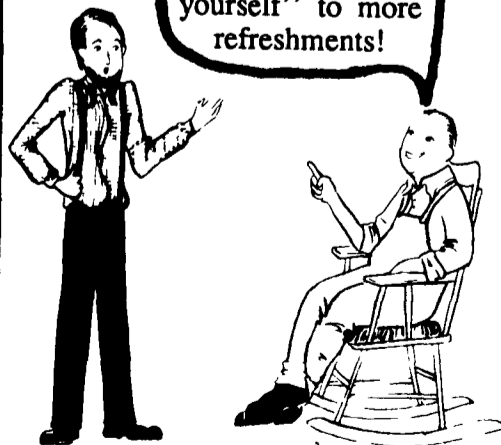
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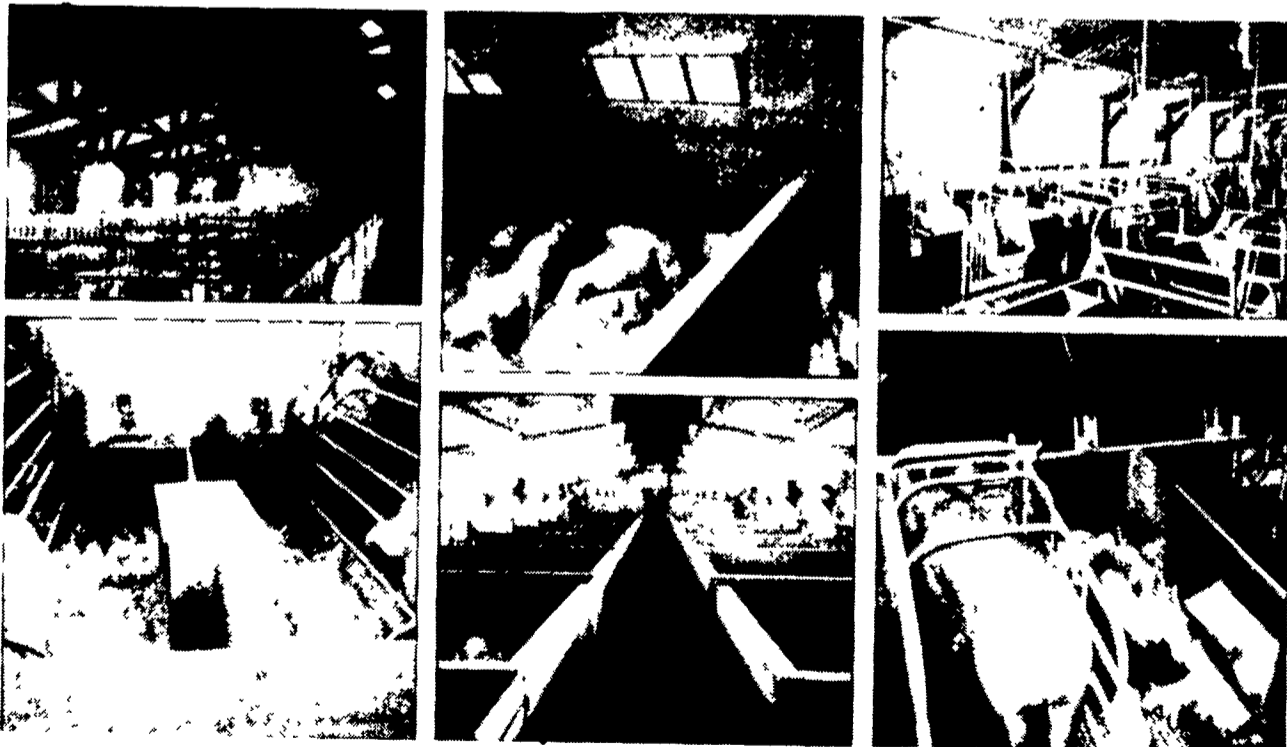
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