

# No-Till Works Well In Drought Stress Situations

EPHRATA — No-till offers many benefits but it can't cover mistakes, a lesson some farmers learned last year. Those who farmed by the book saw a payoff at harvest, says Dave Schertz, national agronomist for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

SCS officials are encouraged by 1988 no-till results that have been analyzed around the county. When some rain finally came last summer, no-till crops did the best job of conserving and utilizing moisture. No-till corn and soybean yields were often 30 percent higher than conventional till, Schertz reports.

Schertz says that under extreme conditions there are problems for any system and mistakes magnify these problems when it's dry. If you haven't yet done so, now's a good time to review last year's results and recheck management practices that ensure no-till success, especially weed control.

Don't make decisions based solely on 1988 experience, he advises. Some experts called it the

worst drought in 50 years, while others said it was the worst ever recorded. Schertz says, reports from the field indicate farmers who no-tilled for the first time last season are talking about planting deeper. he suggests watching weather forecasts and making decisions accordingly.

If in doubt, seek advice from local, university extension specialists or other no-till experts. Or, talk to farmers with several years of no-till experience. Last year, says Schertz, "experienced no-tillers generally fared better than first-timers."

### Eliminate competition

Extreme heat in 1988 caused some problems that couldn't be corrected, such as "baking of the soil surface," says the SCS agronomist. This could have been avoided by completely controlling vegetation that kept crops from fully using that little moisture was available.

Schertz says some farmers waited too long before applying herbicides. They sprayed just

before planting or prior to crop emergence. In a drought, seeding into cover crops or sod that's not completely burned down can be especially deadly.

On soils with poor water holding capacity, moisture conservation is aided by using a burndown herbicide like Gramoxone Super, about two to three weeks before planting. Another weed control key is to spray when weeds are young and growing actively -- generally no more than six inches tall.

No-till experts constantly stress the importance of using a burndown herbicide in addition to residual herbicides. Failure to follow that advice is a mistake that's magnified by dry weather. A lack of rainfall to properly activate residual compounds lead to weed problems and increased crop competition for limited moisture.

Prior to harvest there were reports the drought had hit no-till the hardest, an observation that changed dramatically. At season's end, there were many reports of

success. For instance, a Purdue University project tabulated net returns for 41 Indiana corn and soybean fields under various tillage systems. The most profitable field was no-till soybeans, which averaged nearly 53 bushels and netted \$259 an acre.

When weeds were properly

## White Oak Mills Names Purchasing Director

ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Ivan Wenger has been named director of purchasing for White Oak Mills. White Oak is a supplier of total feeds, feed ingredients, animal health and pet needs, with customers throughout southcentral Pennsylvania.

Wenger, a 14-year veteran of the feed industry, will be responsible for purchasing feed ingredients and animal health products. He also will develop a stronger merchandising program for White Oak's bulk feed ingredients, which are sold to farmers who mix their own feeds.

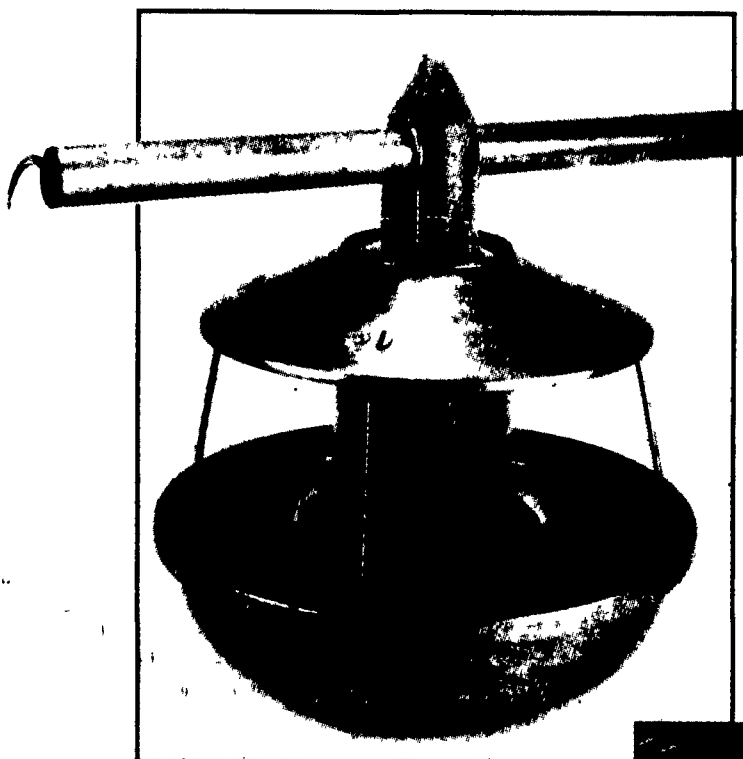
Wenger was raised on a dairy

controlled and crops were well managed, Schertz says late-season rains sparked a strong surge for no-till. "The majority of our reports were favorable. In a nutshell, no-till fared especially well and did much better at the end of the season that previously thought," he concludes.

farm near Ephrata. He and his wife, Nancy, live in Brickerville with their three children, Randy, 16, Brian, 14, and Brenda, 11.



Ivan Wenger



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