

Corn Grower President Has Model Conservation Farm



CORN TALK NEWS

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

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farm with almost no erosion of soil.

"When the spring rains come, I would not be afraid to drink the water that comes off the lower fields because it's almost clear," Troop said. "That's a satisfaction I get, to be able to produce a good crop of corn and do it without a lot of soil washing."

Corn is planted with no-till methods that allow corn to follow corn each year. The crop is marketed as high moisture corn. The corn stalk residue left on the fields helps to keep the soil from eroding. Build-up of nutrients left in the soil from the farm's over-population of livestock 20 years ago allows for reduced fertilizer needs.

"It's rare that I need anything but nitrogen fertilizer," Troop said. "When I started farming, the soil was very high in ferti-

ty. I constantly soil test because I can't afford to play a guessing game.

"At first, test results showed excessive nutrients in the soil, but now, potash and phosphorus levels are coming back to normal levels."

His experience with soil tests on his own farm makes Troop believe that many local farms have nutrient build-up on their farms. And for this reason he believes the new nutrient management laws to go into effect in Pennsylvania are needed.

"Increasing numbers of animal units on decreasing acres in production makes it necessary to know exactly what nutrients you are handling and what they are and where they are ending up," Troop said.

"You hate to tell someone he doesn't have enough land to operate," Troop said. "But if you don't have a way to dispose

of the waste, sometime in the future you will end up with a pile of manure and no place to go with it."

In addition, Troop sees nutrient management laws needed to guard against farmers who don't care about the environment. He cited example of a rather large dairy operation located on only six or seven acres that had to depend on neighbors to get rid of the manure. "I don't think farmers can continue with this kind of operation with no acres to handle the waste," Troop said.

Some farmers also build dairy or hog structures beside streams and even vent manure structures into the waterways during storms to get rid of the excess manure water. Troop called these "ugly situations" and said if a farmer had any conscience at all, he wouldn't do these things. He called far-

mers "slobs" who get fresh water from up stream but contaminate the environment down stream.

"That's where you need regulations—in ugly situations that just left to a man's conscience to fix up, he doesn't do it."

In the future, Troop believes corn production in Pennsylvania will also change because of nutrient management laws. Applying manure on clean fields (plowed under corn stalks) is also dangerous because nutrients can be lost with soil erosion. Conservation compliance to participate in government programs has brought on changes in corn farming in the mid-West. In Pennsylvania, the nutrient management laws will change the way corn is planted here.

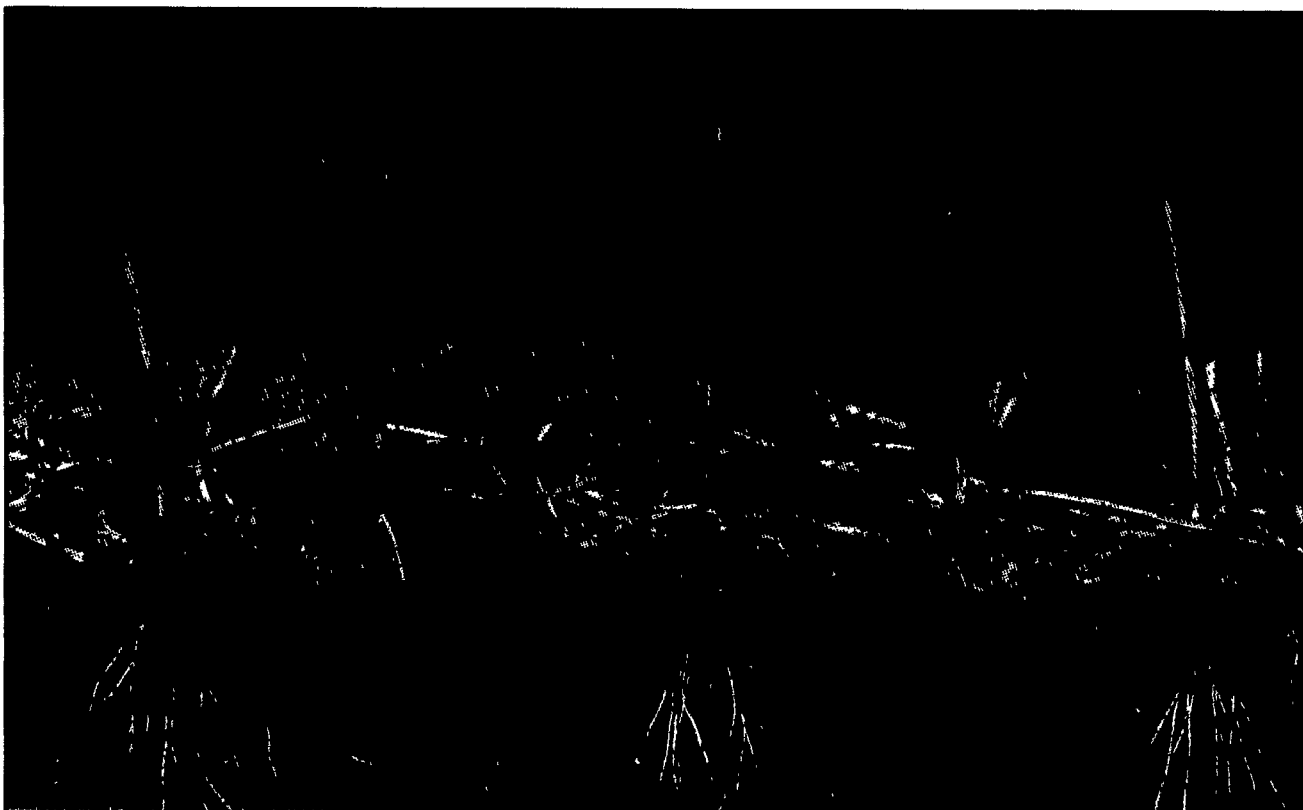
Members of the Master Corn Growers Association have

many benefits, including the exchange of ideas with other farmers, researchers and industry people. Troop believes this exchange is a vital part of the corn grower's existence.

"Corn is grown in so many different ways," Troop said. "And with the organization, you can network information with others that will help your bottom line. The margins in growing corn are small, and a few blunders will quickly take the profit out of the crop."

"Sometimes when you look only at total output or production, your methods can be harmful to the environment, but when you look at economic output, what pays and what doesn't, the limits of economy are in line with what's best for the environment.

"I find when you get to meetings and hear what others have to say, you are forced to think through how you do things and you become more mindful when you are doing it yourself," Troop said.



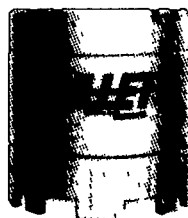
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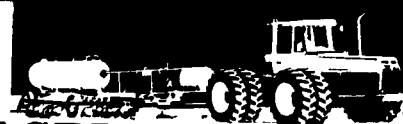
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