

Project Looks At No-Till Corn

BEDFORD (Bedford Co.)—Bedford county corn growers are cooperating in a study designed to evaluate the role of trashwheels in no-till corn and to look at potential barriers of adoption of no-till corn in the area.

The study has been sponsored by the Bedford County Conservation District, Penn State's Department of Agronomy, and Bedford County Cooperative Extension.

Richard Hershberger, agriconservation technician for the Bedford County Conservation District, has been coordinating the project along with Greg Roth, an assistant professor of agronomy at Penn State.

"We've established plots on about 15 local fields to examine the effects of the trashwheels mounted on the district's plan-

ters," said Hershberger. Hershberger coordinates a no-till program in the county which makes four rental corn planters available to county corn growers.

This year, 60 farmers rented equipment with about 75 percent of the cooperators no-tilling their fields. Nearly 1,300 acres were planted with the rental planters.

On two of the planters, Hershberger installed trashwheels on two of the four planting units. The trashwheels are devices that are added to a conventional no-till corn planter to help remove crop residue from the furrow without moving any soil.

Ideally, the trashwheels could create a residue-free environment with warmer soil temperatures that should

enhance germination and emergence. Growers who rented these specially adapted planters to plant their corn established side-by-side comparisons for the research group to monitor.

The trashwheels used in this study were made by John Deere. They were installed in conjunction with the existing no-till coulters, not in place of the coulters, since there have been some concerns about taking the no-till coulters off to install the trashwheel. This necessitated some modifications to the planters to accommodate these.

Measurements being collected from each field include plant populations, soil temperatures, and grain yield. Accord-

ing to Hershberger and Roth, the population data is still being analyzed, but large differences between the coulters systems have not been apparent, probably because this was such a good year for corn to emerge from the ground.

A second objective of the study has been to evaluate

potential problems growers encounter when adopting no-till. Among the problems encountered so far are insect problems in sod fields, weed escapes in spring-killed sods, and uneven manure applications before planting. None of these problems appear insurmountable, however.

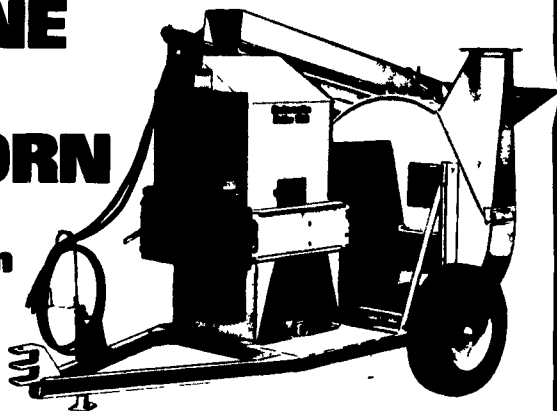
Sold at today's market price, 50-billion bushels of corn would generate approximately \$135 billion. According to the U.S. Feed Grains Council, that sum would pay for nearly half of the fiscal year 1992 federal deficit most recently estimated at \$290 billion by the Office of Management and Budget.

1993 marks the year in which the United States will export its 50-billionth bushel of corn. In 1991 the top five export markets for U.S. corn were Japan, the Former Soviet Union, South Korea, Taiwan and South Africa, reports the U.S. Feed Grains Council.

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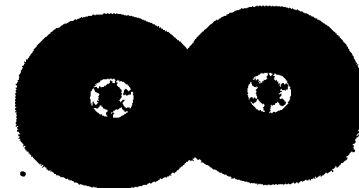
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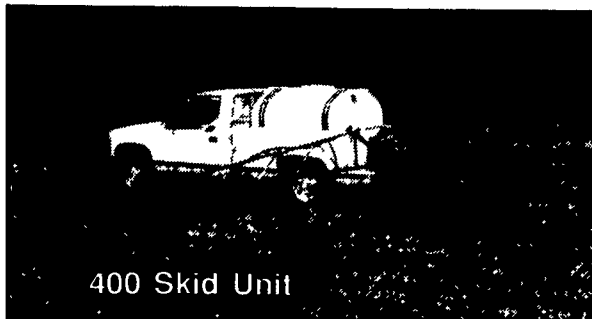
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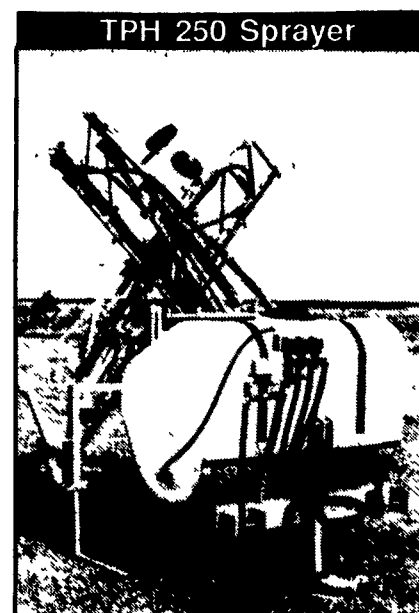
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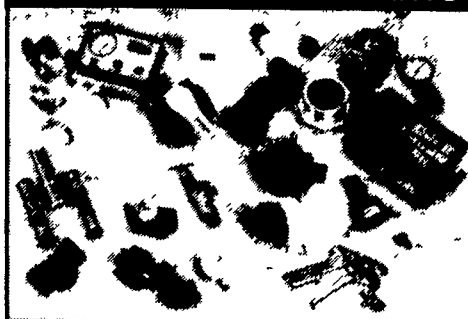


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