

Producers Try Narrow Row Corn

(Continued from Page 1)

tions that use narrow row technology in vegetables or other crops have been successful as far away as Michigan.

At Groff's farm, Roth spoke about the challenges growers face when trying narrow row corn.

"Most of the corn we grow in Pennsylvania and the corn-producing states is grown on 30-inch rows," said Roth. "To some folks that is narrow row corn." Rows measured 36-38 inches 15-20 years ago. In the years since, row spacing was reduced to 30 inches to make fields more productive.

Today's corn varieties have the potential to work with narrow rows. To do so, equipment has to be modified at planting and harvest to accommodate narrower rows.

At Groff's farm, a field that used to be in alfalfa was planted with narrow row corn, 15 inches wide. Theoretically, said Roth, the narrow row corn should provide early season growth and higher yields. Many growers have experienced a 5-6 percent grain yield increase as a result of using narrow rows. Producers have seen a 10 percent increase in yields for corn silage.

"Now we're at the point

where it's time for producers like Steve and other folks to try this system on their farms," said Roth.

The advantages of narrow row corn include earlier canopy of the ground, which would help retain soil moisture and control weed growth. Other potential benefits include decreased soil erosion and increased nutrient uptake.

"It makes sense that we might be able to benefit from a system that captures more light and shades the ground," he said.

Also, nutrient uptake per acre is about 10 percent higher, "kind of important for folks interested in nutrient management and wanting a corn crop that takes up as much nutrients as possible," he said.

A conventional planting of field corn has populations on 30-inch rows to about 30,000-32,000 plants per acre. Narrow row corn density is about 38,000-42,000 plants per acre.

In many cases, producers can simply use a 30-inch planter and double back on the rows. The only drawbacks could be in harvesting the material.

"Harvesting is a little bit more of a challenge," said Roth. "Generally, even harvest-

ing these plots the last few years, I don't find a whole lot of problems."

Equipment can be modified in a machine shop for \$3,000-\$4,000. Amortizing of equipment costs can be done at \$5 per acre planting and \$5 for harvesting.

A drawback could be the higher starter fertilizer costs since more product is necessary to accommodate more corn in narrower rows.

Also, for farmers using insecticide or starter fertilizer, "you might be looking at 50-100 percent more cost there," or about \$5-\$10 per acre additionally for narrow row, Roth noted.

Roth said that for silage corn, producers have adapted their equipment to narrow row corn accordingly. They use a German rotary head that fits on a self-propelled chopper.

But narrow row corn has benefits beyond yield.

"Some farmers in Maryland I've talked to say that if you get

a windstorm or something, the stalks can sort of lay against one another. And they have said, if anything, they feel it's not that big of a problem."

Roth said he hears encouraging results from farmers. "I'm looking forward to seeing what kind of results we get here. I think this could be promising."

Bob Anderson, Lancaster County crops agent, said that "many of us, for many years, have been looking at whatever we can do to maximize our yields." But while many people think that more inputs are necessary for yields, the reverse may be true — that too many inputs can hurt yields.

That's why Penn State con-

tinues to examine what field inputs are needed and to adjust the rate of fertilizers accordingly.

Also, according to Anderson, work is under way to measure what those crops need.

Anderson spoke about the use of a chlorophyll meter that measures the level of the chemical substance in the corn leaf to determine the nitrogen needs of the crop. Using that technology, the Groff corn had sufficient nitrogen for a good yield.

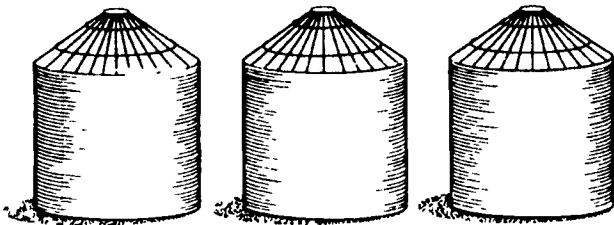
Because the corn was rotated from alfalfa, there was no root-worm damage. However, in late July, European corn borer was damaging some corn in the field.



CORN TALK NEWS

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

COMPARE.



LOOKS ARE DECEIVING!


If you think a bin is a bin and the brand doesn't matter, we can get you a deal on the Brooklyn Bridge, too Brock grain storage bins are better. And we can prove it. Call us. We'll show you how to get more for your money with a Brock bin. And you won't get stuck with the Brooklyn Bridge.

THERE'S ONLY ONE!

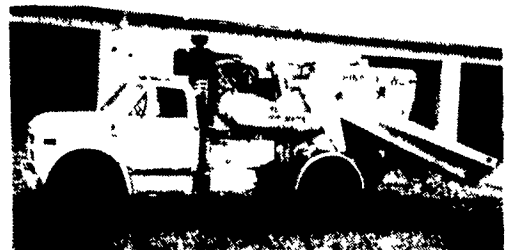


PHONE
717-432-9738
FAX NO.
717-432-8389

1248 SOUTH MOUNTAIN RD., DILLSBURG, PA 17019



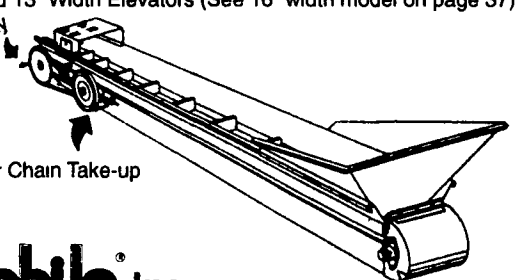
Autobagger Bagging Systems
Custom Bagging 20-100 Lb. Bags



USED FEEDMOBILE With Molasses Mixer

PORTABLE SILAGE AND MATERIAL ELEVATORS (SINGLE CHAIN)
7", 9", 11" and 13" Width Elevators (See 16" width model on page 37)

- Better Engineering
- Stronger Construction
- Smoother, More Dependable Operation
- Wider Choice of Accessories
- Lower Cost



Safety Shields Removed for Display Purposes Only
Conveyor Chain Take-up

Feedmobile Inc.
727 Furnace Hills Pike
Lititz, PA 17543 **717-626-2680**



FOR A DEALER NEAR YOU CALL OR WRITE:

QUALITY And VALUE You Can Hang Your Hat On!

CHEMGRO SEEDS PO Box 218, East Petersburg, PA 17520
717-569-3296 • 800-346-4769 (GROW)