

Ag Progress Demonstrates Corn Harvesting Equipment

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — Kernel processing, fast and more efficient silage harvesting, and even methods to get improved fresh market sweet corn ears into the wagon were highlights of two Ag Progress demonstrations.

During Ag Progress Days in August, a couple of companies introduced corn silage harvesters to a crowd of several hundred visitors to the Rockspring research site.

Afterward, one company put on a show of a sweet corn picker and demonstrated the technology to a crowd of about 45 vegetable growers and agri-industry representatives.

Lynn Hoffman, Penn State agronomist, provided information about the corn hybrid planted at the demonstration area and introduced two corn silage harvesters.

The harvesters included new corn kernel processing technology to allow improved ensiling, which creates better dry matter feed for livestock. The processor, in essence, crimps, cracks, and shreds the kernel to allow improved digestibility for animals.

The corn was planted on 30-inch rows no-tilled on May 15.

The two harvesters demonstrated to the crowd included one that uses a rotating blade and the other with a conventional chopping silage head.

The material was a couple of weeks early to ensile, noted Hoffman, because the corn was at the milking stage with too high moisture in the corn. If the corn was planted in early May instead, the kernel breaking process could have been better demonstrated, he noted.

Visitors were allowed to see how the corn was chopped and loaded into wagons at the site.

In a separate demonstration, sweet corn growers were provided information on several varieties of bicolor sweet corn planted both no-till and conventionally tilled.

The demonstration at the test plots was on a corn picker by a company based in Wisconsin.

The no-till plot was planted May 15 and the conventionally tilled plot was planted May 18, according to Tom Murphy, Lycoming County extension agent. For both plots, a preplant fertilizer with 400 pounds 34-0-0 was used. A sidedressing of 100 pounds of 10-30-10 was also added. About 150 pounds per acre of nitrogen altogether were applied.

In addition, several weed and insect control applications were used.

The no-till plot was planted into rye stubble and hairy vetch. The same applications were applied.

The corn picker draws the stalk into an area that pinches the corn and pulls it off, similar to how it is done by hand in the field.

According to several growers, the challenge is coming up with a machine that can differentiate between useful, marketable ears and those that won't sell on the auction block or at the farm market.

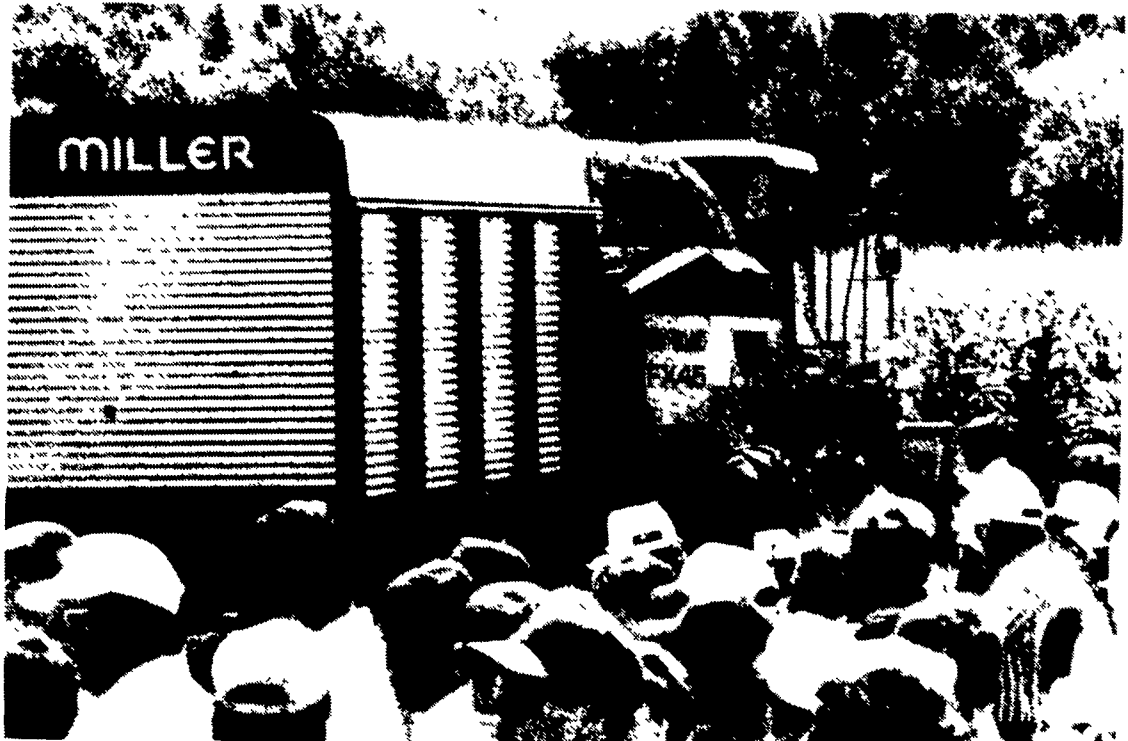
Varieties need to be planted, if using the picker, that mature at the same time.

Also, according to an equipment demonstrator, growers need to consider several factors before deciding to pay about \$26,500 for the machine, including materials and labor cost and sweet corn market prices, before deciding on the cost effectiveness of the picker compared to hand-picking.

The growers had a chance to look into the wagon at the sweet corn picked by the harvester. Many noted that the sweet corn ear size was sufficient.



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