

10 Tips For Improving No-Till Success

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Growing no-till corn successfully can be a challenge sometimes, but many new innovations that have come along during the last 10 years and our increased understanding of no-till corn are making the practice something more farmers should consider.

I have had the opportunity to visit and get to know many successful no-till farmers and also to plant no-till corn for the last 14 years in my research trials. This has given me a good appreciation for both the potential problems as well as some of the key issues to consider in growing no-till corn. I've put together a short list of things to consider for being successful growing no-till corn:

- Plan a system for no-till success. Most successful no-till farmers have developed some sort of system that they use to help make no-till successful. This usually involves a rotation with different crops and some system for manure management. By planning ahead they can make decisions on varieties and management practices that help to contribute to successful no-till production.

- Stick with it. Most farmers and crop consultants tell me it takes 4-5 years before they really see no-till soils develop that are easier to manage. Typically, this results from increased or-

ganic matter levels in the soil surface and better structure and less potential for soil compaction.

- Pay attention to your planter. No-till is much less forgiving than tilled systems to a planter that is not adjusted properly or that has some worn parts and is not placing the seeds at a consistent depth and spacing in the row. Shoot for a seeding depth of 1.5 to 2 inches deep.

- Be diligent about weed control. Since you are not using tillage to control weeds, often the potential weed pressure will be higher. Over the long term, mediocre weed control can lead to the development of perennial weed problems and heavy annual weed pressure, making control difficult. New herbicides and Roundup Ready crops make this problem a lot easier.

- Consider your soils and plan accordingly. Different soils lend themselves to no-tilling differently and require different tactics. Wet soils dry out slowly and often require zone tillage. Deep soils result in heavy crops with lots of residue. Shallower, rocky, soils are ideal candidates for no-till.

- Select hybrids that are adapted to no-till and your system. High yield potential, good disease tolerance, and good early season growth are factors to consider. Consider Bt hybrids on double crop corn and Roundup Ready hybrids where

weed control is challenging or expensive. Don't push maturity on hybrids — this may delay harvesting and promote more compaction. Pay attention to refuge requirements.

- Consider row cleaners. Row cleaners are particularly useful where you have lots of corn stalks, soybean residue, or manure that can interfere with good seed-to-soil contact. Avoid using them in standing green rye or other cereal crop residues.

- Be prepared to plant when the soil is fit. Try not to plant when soils are too wet. Often this leads to problems. When soils are fit, be ready to plant as much as possible. Many no-tillers are successfully planting very early when soil conditions are right in an effort to extend the planting window.

- Consider using a starter fertilizer. On higher fertility soils, I have had success with higher N starter fertilizers to increase the N availability early in the season. Some growers put UAN or urea at planting 4 inches off the row and then skip the starter or add some pop-up at 3-5 gallons/acre on the seed.

- Take advantage of the labor savings. For many no-tillers, the advantage is not in higher yields, but the ability to devote more time to other activities. This could include cropping more acres, attending to livestock, or working at another job.

CWT Program Begins

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Starting this month, participating dairy farmers will have 5 cents per hundredweight taken off their milk checks toward the National Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) program.

The down-scaled program was "officially launched" at a National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) board of directors meeting July 8, according to Shahna Williams, NMPF executive secretary.

NMPF officials reported July 3 that they had reached their goal of having 70 percent of the nation's milk supply in the program.

The proposed assessment was recently lowered from 17.9 to 5 cents per hundredweight after a number of farmers and independent cooperatives voiced significant resistance to the one-year program designed to raise farm milk prices across the country.

Alan Wagner, editor of the USDA's Fluid Milk and Cream Review, said in his July 2 report that "sharply higher cheese prices, lower cow numbers, and below year-ago milk output" have been cited as reasons for the failure of the original program.

Ken Bailey, Penn State dairy economist, has been reporting that overall dairy markets are

improving. In his June 27 report, Bailey wrote that Chicago Mercantile Exchange Class III milk futures peaked at \$13 per hundredweight in September/October.

Herd buyouts, production cut-back incentives, and export price assistance make up CWT's three-legged proposal to raise milk prices.

Most of the buyout and reduction incentives are targeted to western and southwestern states.

The new CWT proposal will use the proceeds from the 5-cent per hundredweight assessment to reduce milk supplies by a projected 1.2 billion pounds over the next 12 months. According to the NMPF, that should boost all-milk prices by an average of 23 cents per hundredweight.

The assessment will be taken from milk produced beginning July 1, according to Williams of NMPF.

Farmers/members of participating cooperatives, including Dairy Farmers of America and Land O' Lakes, will have the 5 cents/hundredweight automatically removed from their checks.

Independent farmers and members of independent co-ops who want to participate, however, need to sign up. Sign-up forms for these producers will be sent out by the end of July, said Williams.

Animal Health Safeguards Crucial For Expanding Trade

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Protection of the U.S. cattle herd is a top priority for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and very important in considering expanded trade both imports and exports.

Cattle producers are looking to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to ensure appropriate safe-

guards are met to prevent the introduction or spread of foreign animal diseases.

In comments filed recently with APHIS on the proposed rule regarding importation of beef from Uruguay, NCBA said trading partners must share our "values of honesty, integrity and compliance with U.S. and international standards for animal health and food safety."

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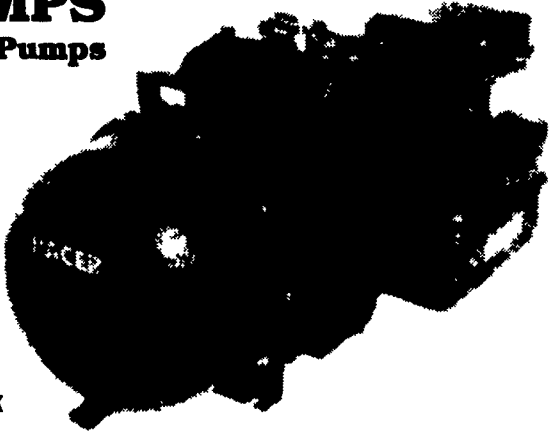
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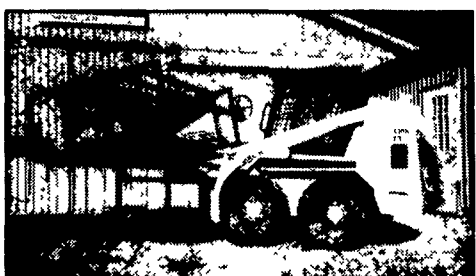


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