

Western Iowa No-Tillers (WIN) Demonstration Field Day
Clint McDonald and Terry Torneten
160-Natural Resources and Stewardship
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Problem

No-till farming has been shown to reduce soil erosion, and to reduce costs (i.e. fuel, labor and machinery) by eliminating trips across the field. However, some crop producers have been slow to adopt the no-till farming practice. While the more progressive producers, currently using no-till, continually seek-out what is new in no-till systems. With the recent jump in input costs and current economic conditions driving more corn on corn, crop producers of all types have expressed interest in exploring what is new with no-till.

Response

A group of local crop producers, Southwest Iowa Area ISU Extension staff, NRCS staff and Harrison and Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation commissioners and staff along with conservation and production experts planned the Western Iowa No-Tiller's (WIN) Demonstration Field Day. Over 150 people attended the day-long program held at Minden, Iowa on June 17, 2008. Cropping rotations, fertilizer placement, seed to soil contact, moisture conservation and fuel savings were subjects addressed by a host of experts. A particular emphasis of the day was corn on corn acres. Management of residue cover and planting populations and seed depths was also emphasized. A display of no-till planters was on-site. Presentations from six ISU Extension specialists representing crop physiology, pest and soil management and water quality were featured in the field demonstrations. Keynote speakers in the second the afternoon session were Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey and ISU Climatologist Elwynn Taylor. To conclude the program a panel of local farmers who are engaged in no-till farming commented and responded to questions from the audience.

Impact

This first-of-its kind, in the Southwest Iowa Area, no-till field day provided participants hands-on learning opportunities. The day provided crop producers an opportunity to candidly discuss production practices and management challenges with people committed to long-term success with no-till. Producers also networked with fellow no-tillers in various stages of no-till adoption to learn first-hand what practices work the best. This field day achieved a major goal of underscoring how economically viable continuous no-till production methods are in the soils of Western Iowa. The day also highlighted the latest technologies and developments in those methods.

Financial support provided by 20 different businesses and agencies totaled \$4,100.

Comments from participants were, "The information presented today was useful." "I gained helpful hints in planting corn-on-corn, adjusting planting depths and how to set planters." "It was great to see different lines of equipment." "I plan to use ideas I learned about bio-fuel and energy conservation in my own operation." Many new topics were suggested for future field days.

The planning committee, including ISU Extension staff members Clint McDonald (Harrison County CEED) and Kent Ganzer (Shelby County Ag and Hort Program Assistant) and Terry Torneten (Shelby County CEED), is moving forward with plans for a 2009 field day.