

Tri-State Conservation Tillage Conference Survey*
January 23, 2007
Radisson, West Middlesex, PA

Because conservation tillage is an important ecological, technological, and economical method of crop production that demands our attention a program was conducted to provide current information and recent research to farmers using and considering the use of these techniques. This program was designed by producers and educators from the tri-state area including representatives of the Ohio, Penn State and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the USDA-NRCS in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York and the Penn Soil/Conservation and Development Area. The primary focus was to help farmers and producers develop a sound, sustainable cropping system.

At the conference 151 farmers attended with 80 completing surveys. Sixty-five farmers reported owning, renting and farming 37,118 acres. They reported farming 31% (11,643 of 37,118 acres) with continuous no-till practices.

Sixty-five percent (48 of 74) reported that they had attended at least one previous conference. Of those attending a previous conference they reported the following actions:

86% (44 of 51) changed or modified a fertilization practice,
69% (35 of 51) changed a pest (weed, insect or weed) management practice
63% (32 of 51) modified a tillage practice to increase organic matter
59% (30 of 51) changed or modified a crop rotation
55% (28 of 51) saved time/money using conservation tillage (practices)
55% (28 of 51) purchase no-till equipment
43% (22 of 51) modified a practice to reduce soil compaction
31% (16 of 51) changed or modified business management or record keeping

After listening and reviewing the presentations about nitrogen fertilizer, conservation tillage and manure management producers were asked how likely they would be to make a change in their management practices.

89% (56 of 63) would very likely or moderately likely modify nitrogen or fertilizer applications
85% (50 of 59) would very likely or moderately likely modify a conservation tillage practice
69% (27 of 39) would very likely or moderately likely modify manure management applications in no-till systems

The 2007 Farm Bill, nitrogen management, manure management in conservation tillage systems, and cover crop management were topics discussed at the conference. Those completing the survey were asked how well informed they were in these topics before and after the conference. They reported the following increases in knowledge.

Nitrogen management 79% (62 of 70) were somewhat informed or well informed before
100% (70 of 70) were somewhat informed or well informed after

Cover Crop Management	70% (45 of 64) were somewhat informed or well informed before 97% (62 of 64) were somewhat informed or well informed after
Manure management	78% (47 of 60) were somewhat informed or well informed before 95% (57 of 60) were somewhat informed or well informed after
2007 Farm Bill	54% (40 of 74) were somewhat informed or well informed before 64 % (51 of 80) were somewhat informed or well informed after

When asked what they believed the greatest challenges to no-till are: they offered the following list:

Weather,	slugs
Weeds	managing crop residues
Manure management	cover crop management
Cash (for equipment)	breaking the plow cycle
Knowledge (of no-till)	organic producers

When asked how they learned about this seminar the following were reported:

43% (35 of 82)	Extension Newsletter
26% (21 of 82)	Individual mailing
11% (9 of 82)	friend
9% (7 of 82)	Periodical
12% (10 of 82)	Newsletter and other

The following speakers were recommended for future conferences:

Ray Rawson	Paul Schaffert
Mack Loux OSU	Tibor Horvath
Dr. Robert Mullen	Ed Winkle
Jill Clapperton	Dan Towery

Topics suggested for future conferences:

A speaker to address perennial weed control and fungicides
Soil ecosystem
Nutrient management
Equipment for no-till twin row corn and beans
Soil fertility, soil management, soil testing, liming
Soil compaction, Zone tillage
Economics, cost and time per acre
Slug management, soil insects
Ethanol production

Comments:

Outstanding speakers (7)
Continue a farmer panel (2)
Excellent topics and conference, Well organized, Top notch chairman

*The committee to promote No-till and conservation tillage.

Sponsored by:

Ohio, Penn State and Cornell Cooperative Extension

USDA-NRCS (OH, PA, NY)

Conservation Districts (OH, PA, NY)

Penn Soil Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area

Supporting Industries and individuals

Nelson Smith, Clarion County Penn State Cooperative Extension Chair

Ed Petrus, USDA/NRCS Lawrence/Mercer Counties, Secretary

Lee Miller Beaver County Penn State Cooperative Extension survey reporter