

THE LEADING EDGE

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A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO MAXIMIZING YIELD POTENTIAL

Conservation Tillage Offers Amazing Benefits

Millions of dollars saved in fuel costs. Better water quality. New habitat for wildlife. Rich, preserved topsoil that serves as the perfect environment for healthy, abundant yields. One only has to look to the amazing benefits of conservation tillage to understand its increase in usage since the adoption of biotechnology in the late 1990s.

While reduced tillage practices, such as mulch-till and ridge-till, have remained somewhat steady, no-till farming has undeniably become the method of choice for growers. Conventional tillage practices focus primarily on weed control and require growers to till in the fall, disc prior to planting, and cultivate while applying herbicide. While these methods work to some degree, they also leave farmland vulnerable to wind and rain erosion, which washes away herbicides, making them less effective and causing unnecessary waste.



Residue Managers with SharkTooth™ wheels in no-till corn stalks

The use of no-till farming practices has expanded progressively as herbicide-tolerant, bio-tech crops have been adopted by growers over the last decade. Through no-till practices, the residue that is left on the ground preserves the topsoil and moisture content in the soil and improves water permeation, aeration, and soil tilth. No-till methods better simulate the natural cycle of the soil, thereby producing healthier, more nutrient-enriched plants. In order to ensure pinpoint seed placement and avoid hairpinning, however, residue needs to be removed from the row before planting.

Growers are finding that some bio-tech crops tend to produce thicker, heavier residue, making removal prior to planting somewhat problematic. Bio-tech farmers need practical options

for effectively removing the residue and placing it to the side of the row. This method preserves the residue as a protective cover, trapping vital moisture needed in drier times and preventing the soil from crusting in heavy rains. In order to be successful, growers need to be careful to choose equipment that is able to take on trash and wet, heavy residue without bunching it.



Residue Managers with SharkTooth™ wheels in no-till field.

Choosing the right residue manager is critical in making the bio-tech operation flourish. There are many just enough to clear it without hitting adjacent rows and moves a narrow strip of residue to ensure proper seed placement without hairpinning. There are also a wide array of residue management options and attachments to meet the needs of every unique operation.

For example, the SharkTooth™ wheels from Yetter Manufacturing Company are popular among bio-tech growers who need effective solutions for especially heavy residue. Tough enough to take on the BT corn hybrids; other bio-tech corn hybrids, such as rootworm resistant corn; and the growing corn-on-corn acreage, the Shark Tooth™ is the perfect match to tackle the toughest conditions.

In no-till operations, growers have also found it beneficial to combine a coultter with their residue manager. After the residue manager kicks the residue out of the way, the coultter loosens the soil (without creating air pockets), eliminates compacted seed trench sidewalls, and sets the stage for the planter opener.



Conservation tillage planting practices.

This reduces planter bounce and allows for more precise seed placement. Seed rows warm faster, and the coultter-worked soil positively invites moisture.

It is clear that biotechnology and conservation tillage practices have become the preferred methods in agriculture today. With the outstanding benefits of no-till techniques, it is certain that their popularity with growers will only increase in the future; however, it is also essential to apply effective residue management techniques in order to facilitate a more uniform

planting depth and the perfect seed environment for better emergence and quicker stands.

*Patent pending

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