

Innovation News

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MARCH 8 MEETING REVIEW

The Innovative Farmers met on Friday, March 8, at Cousins. Ray Rawson, representing Unverferth Manufacturing was the guest speaker. Ray emphasized the importance of implementing the "system", the role of the "zone-builder" and how soils will change over time using reduced tillage.

A business meeting was held with reports from several committees. Additional details on the committee work is provided in this newsletter.

A discussion was held on how we might implement a new phase of the project designed to look at narrow row zone-till production. After a very good discussion, the group voted to maintain both plot sites with 30" production systems. The 22" equipment would be used on members' farms to compare 22" production systems with 28"/30" systems.

Following the meeting, the work groups proceeded to develop the detailed plot plans for 1996 based on their analysis of the 1995 results.

NARROW ROW PROJECT

A proposal was submitted to the Michigan Corn Marketing Committee for the purpose of leasing a tractor, a 22" cart, a planter and a cultivator. The proposal was accepted and will be funded for three years.

The members decided at the last IF meeting that the equipment will be used on members' farms to compare 22" with 30" zone-till and 22" zone-till with conventional tillage.

A committee consisting of Greg Renn, Tim Leipprandt and Bill McPhee was established to determine rental rates for non-plot use of the equipment.

Large plots (10 to 20 acres) would be used for this project.

GPS/PRECISION AG

The Precision Ag Committee met to look at various options for implementing a precision farming system on a number of farms. Yield mapping is the place to start so we need to determine how we might generate some yield data.

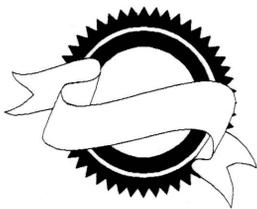
We would like to involve a limited group of members to help gather some yield data so we could start getting a handle on the possibilities and limits of the GPS/Precision Ag Systems.

One option was to install the Extension GPS system and sensors in a rented combine and lease it out. The second option was for members to purchase the sensors (yield and moisture) and then rent/borrow the Extension system to provide GPS data.

For a starter kit, a member might just buy the sensors for the combine. These would cost about \$2,000. The farmer would then use Extension's system to collect data and the software to generate maps. This would be done on a limited basis for learning how to use the GPS system.

To purchase the total GPS system, monitors and sensors would cost about \$8,800. In addition, the software would cost an extra \$2,500.

More discussions are needed and we need to know your interest. Please give us a call, as we would like to work with a few farmers this year.



**MICHIGAN
AGRICULTURE
STEWARDSHIP
GRANTS AWARDED**

All full-membership Innovative Farmers are also members of the Michigan Agriculture Stewardship Association (MASA). Each year MASA provides grants to farmers for conducting applied research/demonstration projects on their farms.

Twenty-two proposals were funded by MASA for the 1996 crop year. Four Innovative Farmer members were selected for this year's program. Among the recipients were:

Ross Voelker

- mammoth clover intercrop with wheat

Richard Roth

- tillage comparison

Gene Vogel

- twin corn row spacing in zone-till

Steven Koroleski

- quicker emergence in no-till crops

ROTH ELECTED TO MIFFS BOARD

Richard Roth, IF member, Owendale, was recently elected to the Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems Board (MIFFS). MIFFS is funded by W.K. Kellogg Foundation and is one of 18 projects being conducted around the United States to look at developing sustainable agriculture efforts. The Innovative Farmers are now part of MIFFS.

A \$12,000 grant was received for the purpose of developing IF leadership and dissemination of information. As more counties became interested in the concept, there was a need to share the concept with those who were interested.

**INNOVATIVE FARMER
MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

As of April 2, there were 60 full members (up from 54 in 1995), 10 associate members and 48 sponsoring/partners. We need to put together a directory in the near future. New members include:

Dennis Becker - Caro

Fritz Brothers - Pigeon

Keith Gentner - Minden City

Robert Gohsman - Vassar

Tim Good - Owendale

Tom Hess - Vassar

John Knoerr - Sandusky

Don Reif - Saginaw

Aaron Reinbold - Caro

Jim Schornack - Fillion

Darrin Siemen - Harbor Beach

Jack & Phillip Smith - Sunfield

Starkey Farms - Fairgrove

Triple R Farm - Snover

Gene Vogel - Minden City

Welcome to all of these new members and we look forward to seeing you at our summer tours.

INNOVATIVE FARMER CONCEPT GAINING ATTENTION

During the past two months, presentations have been made in Arenac, Barry, Bay, Calhoun, Eaton, Ogemaw, Sanilac and Tuscola Counties reviewing the Innovative Farmers activities.

Calhoun and Tuscola are starting their own groups. Tuscola will be conducting a plot to compare 30-, 28-, 22- and 15-inch row production this year.

Cliff Maust and Ross Voelker met with the farmers from Arenac, Bay and Ogemaw Counties.

POLLUTION SOLUTION CONFERENCE

Bill McPhee will be one of the speakers at the April 2, "Pollution Solutions Conference" in Lansing. The conference is sponsored by Michigan Farm Bureau and Department of Environmental Quality. Richard Roth will also attend to answer questions at the Innovative Farmers booth.

NEW TOPICS IN NEWSLETTER

After the last newsletter, a member suggested that we add a couple of new topic sections in the newsletter. These sections would be "Want Ads", "Help Tips" and "Meeting Reports".

- * If you want to buy or sell something let us know and we will put it in the newsletter.
- * Have an idea or tip that worked? Let us know.

We also plan to have brief reports from members who attend meetings that might be of interest to the IF membership.

Give us your ideas, as we want to make this newsletter *your* newsletter!

TIPS FROM OUR CANADIAN FRIENDS

On handling wheat residue... Use a chaff spreader on your combine to encourage uniform drying and soil warm-up before no-till planting. A light disking (3"-4" depth) of cereal stubble in the fall seems to improve the chances of success when planting no-till corn the following spring.

Wilfred Riddell, Granton

Bob DeBrabandere, who farms near St. Mary's, has three years of 20" row experience with corn, soybeans and edible beans. Bob uses a 12-row planter and 10-row harvester. Losses at bean harvest have been minimized by welding Argus lifters on the combine knife guards. The header is also equipped with Johnson grain savers and stone guards.

A row Buster is used to pre-till rows for their no-till crops on the farm of Larry and Fred Elder near Hensall. After three years, they find the soil structure is much improved. They are now looking at several options which would allow them to move to a one-pass, no-till system.

TERMS:

No-Till: could mean absolute no-till, using one coulter (now called slot-till) or zone-till

Zone-Till: referred to by some as organized tillage

Switching depth wheels... I like using International depth wheels on my John Deere planter. The shape of these wheels leaves a space for the double disc openers to push the soil into without smearing or compacting it. The result is that the closing wheels have loose soil to work with and it is a lot easier to close the seed trench.

Bob Hart, Woodstock



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE IF PROJECT?

1. The 13-wave coulters appeared to create a better seedbed than the eight-wave used in the first year. This is especially important for planting at slower speeds for beets.
2. Applying a minimum of 40 to 50 lbs. N in band at planting for corn resulted in a better pop-up and faster early growth.
3. Use the best corn varieties and normal maturities even for zone-till corn.
4. Martin spindle closures create an uneven surface which should result in less crusting. Seedling can take path of least resistance to surface.
5. If going to zone-till into wheat residue, the residue needs to be mulched or worked shallow in the fall to reduce allopathy effects.

FERTILIZER CONTAINMENT AND PESTICIDE INJECTOR UPDATE

The Innovative Farmers received a \$47,500 grant from the MDA to provide cost-sharing for fertilizer containment and herbicide injector systems.

The Stewardship Committee met and prioritized applications based on number of criteria.

All nine herbicide injectors have been or will be ordered and installed shortly.

Engineering plans are being completed on the containment sites. At least nine containment facilities should be installed by the end of the summer.

A few of these sites will be included on the summer tours.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Fifteen Huron County citizens, representing lenders, farmers and agencies, recently visited Michigan State University on March 25 and 26.

The group visited Michigan Biotechnology Institute to learn about products being developed from agriculture commodities. Representatives of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the Daily Grind, Michigan Marketing Association group and Food Institute at MSU meet with the group.

The group also worked on developing a vision for the Sustainable Ag/Economic Development Project. Stay tuned for details!!



1996 AG EXPO DATES CHANGED

The Michigan State University Ag Expo will be held on June 25-27 this year. Put these dates on your calendar as it's a change from previous year's.

BEET AND BEAN FARM TOUR SCHEDULED

The 1996 Saginaw Beet and Bean Tour will be Tuesday, August 20.

TENTATIVE INNOVATIVE FARMERS TOUR DATE

The tentative date for the 1996 Innovative Farmers Tour is Thursday, August 22.