

Innovation News

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE

Annual Membership fees were due January 31, to maintain your subscriptions and Innovative Farmer membership, please pay this fee as soon as possible at the MSU Extension - Project Office.

ANNUAL MEETING HELD

The Innovative Farmers of Huron County held their Annual Meeting on Tuesday, January 23, at Cousins in Bad Axe. All of the officers were re-elected: Mike Shaw, President; Mike Bushey, Vice-President; Ross Voelker, Secretary; and T.L. Bushey, Treasurer. A number of activities were discussed and several members volunteered to participate on various committees. These activities will be discussed later in this newsletter.

NEXT MEETING - MARCH 8

Ray Rawson has been invited to speak at the next meeting of the Innovative Farmers. Ray will be addressing "Advanced Zone-Till Topics." We will also be working on the plot plans for 1996. The meeting will be held at Cousins and will start at 10:30 a.m. There will probably be a need for a short business meeting to allow each committee to report briefly. Plan now to attend this meeting. Please call Kari at 517/269-6099, by Wednesday, March 6, if you plan to attend.

CHALLENGES

Recently, a letter was sent to the officers addressing several challenges facing the Innovative Farmers Group. While there are no immediate problems, as the Innovative Farmers Project grows, we need to be aware of some of the concerns and think how we might address them. The answers will not be easy. We have a very good project which a great deal of people are watching and are excited about. We need to be sure we plan for the future.

1. Do we need to look at how we perpetuate the program beyond the original five years? Is the organization worth maintaining? Are you receiving benefits that warrant your annual dues?
2. How do we involve the officers into more decision making? How do we fit that concern into all of the other commitments which members have: family, farm and other activities? Do the officers and board need to meet monthly? Over \$100,000 will be passing through the checkbook, does the board/officers need to meet to approve bills like organizations?
3. How do we finance the program when funds are short? Do we look at creating some self-supported work? Do we charge for the mulch master? How much?

Part of the discussion should deal with BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP. Below are some ideas from Ontario:

1. Participation in exchange of ideas among members and with other organizations.
2. Increasing the rate we transfer knowledge.
3. Help develop effective working relationship with researchers, agribusinesses, commodity and environmental groups, and governmental agencies to further the development and adoption of innovative, practical technology.
4. Helping to educate the non-agricultural community on the positive actions of Huron County producers.

Do we need to think about these benefits as value-added for our \$100? These are a few of the issues/concerns that are emerging. Please provide your feedback to the officers or me! Your input is important!

FOCUS GROUPS EMERGING

It appears that as the IF Project grows, a few "focus" groups are emerging. While the tillage plots will continue to be the MAJOR FOCUS, there are several sub-areas which members are interested in exploring.

Below are a few paragraphs on each sub-group. If there is this much interest, we should pursue the possibilities. Maybe a representative from each committee listed below should be on a Board of Directors?

MDA Groundwater Grant

A meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 6, for the group to prioritize and help facilitate the containment grant. Seven IF members are on this committee to help plan and carryout the containment and injector grant.

Over 25 farmers have applied for the cost-sharing for on-farm fertilizer containment and 11 farmers have made applications for the herbicide injector program.

The members interested in the herbicide injectors will be meeting with two local suppliers shortly and we hope to have the systems ordered by February 15.

Economic Development Project to Start

The first planning meeting will be held shortly with the 25 individuals interested in the Economic Development Project. Several Innovative Farmer members have signed up for this effort. An organizational/planning meeting will be held to outline the first year's activities.

Adopting Narrow Rows to Alternative Tillage Systems

On Thursday, January 25, 237 farmers and agricultural suppliers attended the Narrow Row Production meeting in Frankenmuth. Apparently, the narrow row concept is still alive! At this meeting the Innovative Farmers were well represented as presenters and participants.

A meeting will be held shortly to look at options available to IF members who want to explore how they might incorporate zone-till into the narrow row concept. Contacts have been made with Ray Rawson, Unverferth Manufacturing, and local dealers to look at the options.

GPS Committee To Meet

A meeting is being scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, for the GPS Committee to meet and consider how we might implement a yield mapping and soil grid sampling program this year. The meeting will be held at the MSU Extension - Project Office at 1:00 p.m.

Several options will be explored for initiating soil grid and yield mapping and the members will be asked to identify the best one. Everyone is invited to attend.

MASA Grants Available

The Michigan Agriculture Stewardship Association offers \$500 grants to members to conduct on-farm applied research trials. Gary Buchholz and Pat Sheridan received grants last year to compare conventional tillage vs trans-till and to evaluate narrow row sugar beet production.

Participants are required to submit a short application outlining what they want to do and a final report is due showing results and economics.

As MASA members, we are eligible to participate in this program. The grant application is enclosed in this newsletter. If you have questions, or need assistance with your application, contact the MSU Extension - Project Office.

IF Group Invited To Visit Other Counties

Several other counties are considering the possibility of starting Innovative Farmer groups. As a result, we've been invited to make presentations outlining: how we got started, why, the benefits, and review the group's activities. Several members have volunteered to be ambassadors and will be meeting with farmers in Arenac, Barry, Bay, Calhoun, Eaton, Ogemaw and Saginaw Counties.

INNOVATIVE FARMERS GO NATIONAL

Do people know we exist? Does anyone care? Well, we've had requests for information from Platte City, Missouri; Springfield, Illinois; Belding, Michigan; Montcalm County; and most recently, San Francisco, California.

The World Wildlife Fund referred our project to the group in California and they want slides and information.

CONGRATULATIONS: INNOVATIVE FARMERS FEATURED IN FEBRUARY, NATIONAL NO-TILL FARMER MAGAZINE

Ron McCrea, Wil-Le Farms, Bad Axe, is featured in this month's National No-Till Farmer. Take a minute to read about one of our members and how changing tillage has affected the total farm system.

INNOVATIVE FARMERS PLOT SUMMARIES

Below is a brief outline of each committee's report. This information should be used to start the 1996 plot plan.

Shaw Site

Tillage: Trans-Till

Committee Chair: None

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - N application the same for next year at 50 lbs. trans-till and 50 lbs. planter then soil N test
 - Continue manure application
2. What surprised you?
 - The Strohm didn't do as well as the year before
3. What didn't work?
 - The spray didn't work as well in the dry beans, need to use the dry granular Eptam
4. Changes for next year?
 - Plant just next to old row
 - Use Eptam 20G
 - Keep using mulch master in wheat stubble before beets
 - Try not to cultivate if it is bringing up lumps
 - Continue to broadcast post spray corn
 - Raise dry bean seeding rate in zone- and trans-till

Tillage: Plow & Chisel

Committee Chair: Mel Gingrich

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - Good weed control in corn
2. What surprised you?
 - How high the yields were in all the crops
3. What didn't work?
 - Wanted better weed control in dry beans
 - Not enough N in plow tillage for corn
 - Lower populations in corn
4. Changes for next year?
 - Try to V-Rip sugar beet ground
 - More nitrogen in plowed corn

Voelker Site

Tillage: Plow

Committee Chair: Cliff Maust

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - Beets planted earlier than other systems
 - Soil nitrate test and sidedress applications good
 - Dry bean herbicide program provided good control
2. What surprised you?
 - Unhappy with sugar content
3. What didn't work?
 - Too much wind erosion
 - Lower percent sugar content cost \$20 per acre
4. Changes for next year?
 - More rainfall
 - Try cover crop on plow beans in the fall before going to beets

Tillage: Chisel

Committee Chair: T.L. Bushey

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - Everything except questioning the number of field passes to prepare the seed bed for dry beans
2. What surprised you?
 - That our chisel system performed better than the plow system
3. What didn't work?
 - Basagran needs to be applied within 10 days of planting when weeds are small
4. Changes for next year?
 - Apply Basagran when weeds are less than 1 inch or within 10 days of planting which ever comes first. Possibly omitting Eptam and using Basagran as part of a program not a rescue. Adding Stinger to post spraying on beets.

Tillage: Trans-Till

Committee Chair: Vern Reinbold

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - Beet weed control was good
 - Yield was good
 - Corn yield fair
2. What surprised you?
 - Sugar content increase in residue tillage systems
3. What didn't work?
 - Poor weed control in dry beans
4. Changes for next year?
 - Try for better weed control in beans; Eptam 20G at recommended rates applied at working width of zone-till coulters

Tillage: Zone-Till

Committee Chair: None

1. What worked out of the plan developed last year?
 - Most everything
2. What surprised you?
 - N application
3. What didn't work?
 - Weed control in dry beans
4. Changes for next year?
 - Split application of N in corn
 - Changes in fertilizer placement (seed furrow)
 - Changes in dry bean program (drill beans)

WANTED

An Innovative Farmer to speak at a meeting in Lansing, as part of a panel, on the topic "Partnerships for Pollution Solutions - Taking the Bull by the Horns or What's Happening in the Field". Big topic! What they want is for a farmer to talk about the Innovative Farmers group, why they are involved and more specifically, what they are doing to address manure management, erosion or pesticide pollution concerns. Who's up to it? Here's your chance to speak up for farmers! If you're interested, give the MSU Extension - Project Office a call.

GREAT LAKES NO-TILL DISCUSSION GROUP MEETING IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

On January 14 and 15, Jim LeCureux attended the Great Lakes No-Till Discussion Group Meeting. This is an annual event where farmers from Ontario, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan meet to discuss a variety of topics. In fact, the discussion covered GPS, fertilization, farmer-invented planter attachments, cross slot planter, narrow row crops, reduced herbicide rates and zone builder. Below are a few of the highlights which I picked up from the farmer participants a complete set of notes can be obtained by contacting Jim at the MSU Extension - Project Office.

General:

- no-till acres increasing nationally, 40 million acres
- corn no-till down in 1995, 12.4 million acres to 12.3 million, soybeans acres increasing

Fertility:

- up N in starter to 60 lbs. in row
- put starter (pop-up) on seeds or very near
- seeing response to P in no-till on high testing soils in Ohio (chart in February National No-Till Farmer Magazine)
- shallow N injection may be better in colder soils

Tillage:

- 10 to 12 bu. increase with Rawson Zone Builder
- used seed firming paddles resulting in more even stand when compared with rows without paddles
- plant 1 to 2 notches shallower with paddles

20-Inch Corn:

- 8% increase in yield compared to 30-inch
- reduced herbicides by \$5 per acre (canopy)

15-Inch Corn:

- further north the better potential for increase yield (capturing more sunlight)
- can drive faster when planting

Reduced Herbicide Rates for No-Till:

- no-till corn @ \$7.45/acre plus Round-Up
- soys are at \$9.00/acre
- scouting important

GPS:

- farmer could not see 30 bu. decrease from combine but it was there (bin evaluations don't work)
- grid sampling and fertilizer application; it's not always economical (dealer statement)

NO-TILL MANAGEMENT: BASIC TECHNIQUES

The Innovative Farmers of Ontario, in cooperation with Monsanto, Cyanamid and CIBA Crop Protection, are sponsoring a meeting in London, Ontario. A copy of the program was previously sent out. For more information should contact the MSU Extension - Project Office.

Some of the topics to be covered include: "Challenge Assumptions, Break the Barriers of Change" - Alan Simmons; "Crop Fertility Management" - Bob Hart, uses a 145 HP tractor to farm 1,800 acres and custom farm 500 acres; "Equipment Set-Up and Operation" - Jack Rigby, 1,500 acre farmer with farm equipment dealership experience.

The cost is about \$40 (U.S. funds). I plan on attending and will be going over the night before. If you are interested in attending, give me a call at 517/269-6099

MEETING NOTICES

- February 22 Herbicide Update, Franklin Inn
- February 27 Saginaw Valley Bean Day, Saginaw
- February 28 Precision Farming Meeting, Lansing
- February 29 No-Till Management: Basic Techniques, London, Ontario

REMINDER



The next Innovative Farmers meeting is to be held Friday, March 8, at 10:30 a.m. at Cousins in Bad Axe. Please call Kari at 517/269-6099, by Wednesday, March 6, if you plan to attend.



INNOVATIVE FARMERS OF HURON COUNTY

c/o MSU Extension ♦ 1460 South Van Dyke ♦ Bad Axe, MI 48413
Phone: 517/269-6099 ♦ FAX: 517/269-8421

President:
Mike Shaw

Vice-President:
Mike Bushey

Secretary:
Ross Voelker

Treasurer:
T.L. Bushey

Committee Chair

Voelker Site:

Plow:
Clifford Maust

Chisel:
T.L. Bushey

Trans-Till:

Zone-Till:
Bill McPhee

Shaw Site:

Plow:
Fred Gottschalk

Chisel:
Mel Gingrich

Trans-Till:
Don Roggenbuck

Zone-Till:
Gary & Gerald
Buchholz

Recently, myself along with Harold Dropeski and his wife Carol attended the Innovative Farmers of Ontario annual meeting in London, Ontario. About 70 voting members attended along with several speakers and sponsors.

Highlights of the two-day event included Dr. Bruce Hunter, who spoke on biotechnology. He explained the process to develop those special hybrids and the impact biotechnology will have in the future. Ray Rawson spoke on zone-till and the importance of minimum tillage to our soils. Gord Scheifele of Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology, spoke on research he has done with narrow row corn. He presented data from his work with 36", 30", 20" and 15" rows, as well as 30" twin and 20" twin rows. This data included yields, population and spacing.

At the banquet, we were treated to a very entertaining speaker by the name of Warren Evans. He spoke on the changing world and the future, with emphasis on the computerized world. After the banquet, we were invited to sit in on three of five round-table discussions featuring: E Plus (similar to the MAX program); Wheat Straw and Other Residue Challenges in No-Till; Manure Management; Spraying and Planting Equipment; and Weed Control and Can Reduced Rates Work.

GPS was another topic in which speakers addressed. I was surprised to see how many farmers had yield monitors. About 20 raised their hands when asked if they had yield monitors. A speaker from Minnesota said there are 1,200 yield monitors currently being used, and they expect there will be 210,000 used by year 2005. Despite these numbers, there still are many obstacles and problems with the current system.

We also heard from Tom O'Dell, a no-till farmer from Indiana, who spoke on soil fertility management. He emphasized the effect compaction has on soil fertility.

We were impressed on how well the group was organized and how well the sponsors worked with them as far as paying for meals and speakers. It was a very interesting experience and we learned many things. But most of all, we enjoyed the friendliness and willingness to share ideas by the people we met.

Mike Shaw, President

**Michigan Agricultural Stewardship Association
On-Farm Research or Demonstration Project
Application for Demonstration Project Funding**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Please describe your proposed idea:

Will it be randomized and/or replicated? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return completed form *by February 28, 1996* to:

Roger French

10004 Stadium Drive

Kalamazoo MI 49009-9426

-OR-

MASA

605 N Birch Street

Kalkaska MI 49646

If accepted, MASA pays cooperators \$500 for a replicated trial plot. A non-replicated plot will receive a lesser amount determined by the MASA Board of Directors. Your participation in this project is appreciated!