

FALL 2017

NEW FARM

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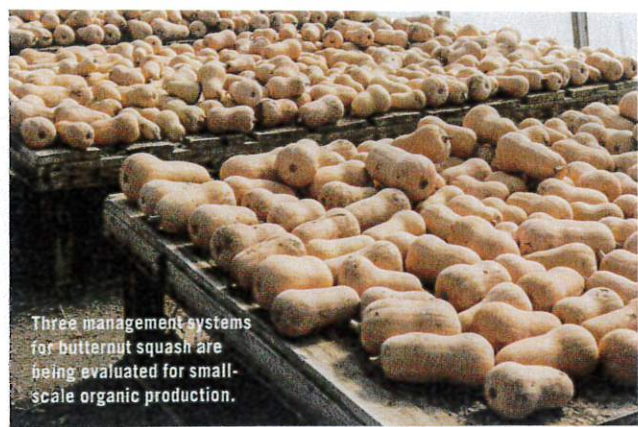
HOES DOWN
HARVEST FESTIVAL

SQUASH SYSTEMS COMPARISON

No-till, low-input technology has the potential to conserve soil health and support robust vegetable production for small-scale and low-capital organic vegetable growers, reports **Gladis Zinati, Ph.D.**, associate research scientist at Rodale Institute. She is evaluating three management systems for growing winter squash in a demonstration trial at two farms. The preliminary results indicate that the no-till, low-input system can be cost-effective, reduce labor, and increase long-term profitability and sustainability.



METHOD Research and demonstration trials have been established at two Kutztown, Pennsylvania, locations: Rodale Institute and Quiet Creek Farm. Three strategies are employed at the Rodale Institute site: The first is a low-input-technology system in which cover crops are rolled and crimped using a walk-behind BCS tractor with a 2-foot roller-crimper attachment. The second is a high-input-technology system where cover crops are rolled using a 10-foot roller-crimper mounted on a tractor. The third is a standard plastic-mulch system: Cover crops are plowed



under, and the soil is covered with black plastic mulch. The test plots are arranged in a randomized complete block design with four replications. At the Quiet Creek Farm site, the first two strategies are being compared to a bare-ground system (Quiet Creek's standard). 'Waltham Butternut' winter squash was planted at both sites.

RESULTS This project, supported by a Northeast SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Partnership Grant, will generate data that can guide small-scale organic farmers seeking viable low-input options for using a no-till system to raise vegetable crops. Final results will be tabulated in winter 2018 and made public in spring 2018.

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