Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
August 13, 2009
Verlon Barnes, District Conservationist

Continuous No-Till Results from Actual Farmers

Looking at the data from 25 actual farmers provided through Nebraska Farmer magazine news articles from July 2007 through June 2009, several general comments can be made as identified from the large majority of these farmers*:

1) Yields have remained the same or increased. Some have increased as much as 33%.
2) Profitability has improved.
3) Soil quality has improved and soil erosion has decreased.
4) Soil moisture has increased and/or supplemental irrigation water has been decreased.
5) Saves on labor and fuel use.

*See attached spreadsheet

DEPUTY SECRETARY MERRIGAN ANNOUNCES FIRST NATIONAL SIGN-UP FOR NEW CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Aug. 6, 2009 – Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin continuous sign-up for the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) on August 10 with the first signup period cutoff scheduled for September 30. CSP is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations.

"This program will help the Nation's agricultural and forestry producers reach greater levels of conservation performance, which will help protect our land and water," Merrigan said. "The conservation benefits derived from maintaining and enhancing natural resources will improve the quality of soil and water, assist in addressing global climate change, and encourage environmentally responsible energy production."

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) authorizes CSP. Congress renamed and revamped the former Conservation Security Program completely to improve its availability and appeal to agricultural and forestry producers. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers CSP. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie, improved pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forestland—a new land use for the program—and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

Eligible applicants may include individual landowners, legal entities, and Indian tribes. The program will be offered to producers in all 50 states, District of Columbia and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups. Agricultural and forestry producers must submit applications by Sept. 30 to be considered for funding in the first ranking period. Congress capped the annual acreage enrollment at 12,769,000 acres for each fiscal year nationwide.

To apply for the newly revamped CSP, potential participants will be encouraged to use a self-screening checklist first to determine whether the new program is suitable for them or their operation. It will be available on NRCS Web sites and at NRCS field offices. After self-screening, the producer's current and proposed conservation practices are entered in the conservation measurement tool (CMT). This tool estimates the level of environmental performance to be achieved by a producer implementing and maintaining conservation activity. The conservation performance estimated by the CMT will be used to rank applications. States will determine their own priority resource concerns, one of the criteria that will be used to rank applications. States will establish ranking pools to rank applications with similar resource concerns.

NRCS field staff also will conduct on-site field verifications of applicants' information obtained from the CMT. Once the potential participant has been field verified and approved for funding, he or she must develop a conservation stewardship plan.

For information about CSP, including eligibility requirements, producers can visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/new_csp or visit their local NRCS field office.

USDA is finalizing the program's policies and procedures. The CSP interim final rule, published in the Federal Register, is open for public comment through Sept. 28.

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CSP Public Meetings in the Papio-Missouri River NRD

August 25, 7:00pm – 8:30pm, First National Bank Northeast, Tekamah, NE
August 26, 10:00am – 11:30am, Chalco Hills Natural Resources Center, Omaha, NE
August 27, 10:00am – 11:30am, Natural Resources Service Center, Dakota City, NE

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June 4, 2009

Nebraska Farmer No-Till Tributes Published Articles

#	Year	Month	Name	County	City	Most Significant Benefit	Reduced Equipment, Labor, or Fuel	Crop Yields Increase	Profitability Increase	Soil Erosion, Health, or Structure	Moisture Conserved/ Irrigation	Greatest Challenge	Weeds, Disease, Pests	Fertilizer
1	2007	July	Rod Zessin	Madison	Madison	improved soil structure	saves time and machinery	experienced yield benefits	no side by side comparisons	soil erosion has decreased	experienced moisture savings	cold soils in the spring for corn	grasses, water hemp, corn borers	
2	2007	Aug.	Russ Cech	Colfax	Rogers	Increase in profits	No till saves my workload	after a 5 year hump	its been the best thing so far for my bottom line	erosion is controled	no till saves moisture	handling the appearance of fields	roundup ready took care of perennials	
3	2007	Sept.	Joel Upp	Cedar	Laurel	It provides a mellow soil which means fewer ditches for repair	invested less in machinery and saves on fuel	crop yields have been up and down	yes	ditches started to heal themselves	I can get by with less irrigation water, save 1-2 inches in soil moisture	moving from a corn-bean rotation to continuous corn	more diseases with corn on corn	
4	2007	Oct.	Keith Olsen	Grant	Grant	weed control, soil structure,	experienced a reduction in machinery needs	yes when rainfall is adequate	no due to below average rainfall	soil structure has improved	soil moisture is higher, more residue covers soil and less water runoff occurs	getting the right equipment	weed control is easier	
5	2007	Nov.	Dick James	Richardson	Verdon	tremendous savings in cost, time and soil	n/a	yes	improving average net profit per acre	conserving soil	there is very little runoff and the infiltration rate is absolutely astounding	had to wait to postemergence shattercane herbicedes	velvetleaf, sunflower, and cocklebur disappeared, winter annuals have cropped up	
6	2007	Dec.	Loren Pestel	Stanton	Stanton	saves time, is able to be a better farmer with extra planning time	no till saves fuel and labor	yields have gone up	n/a	n/a	I don't irrigate, there has been a dramatic increase in soil moisture	was worried about proper equipment and not having the right skills	more striped ground squirrels	
7	2008	Jan.	Brad Sundberg	Polk	Polk	conserving soil moisture	less fuel and equipment needs	yields are the same or better	yes	improved soil quality and structure	I save moisture in the soil so I don't irrigate often	cutting through residue	weeds and grasses have declined, no need to use more herbicide	
8	2008	Feb.	Dean Schoneweis	Gage	Adams	saves time, fuel, and soil	saves time and fuel	yields are just as good, if not better	yes	good soil health and erosion control	moisture increased	has to apply anhydrous ammonia because of moisture increase	more marestail and henbit	I get more value out of fertilizer
9	2008	March	Marty Peterson	Burt	Lyons	erosion control	saves time, labor, and fuel	raises better crops	profitability has gone up	n/a	very important, all dryland	changing my attitude of what a field should look like	winter annual weeds	
10	2008	April	Vinson Vangen	Gage	Adams	soil moisture & texture	experienced labor savings	are more consistant	profitability has gone up	erosion is controled, structure improved	in dry periods economical yields are still produced	staying commited through years of high moisture and heavy residue	greatly reduced bindweed, milloweek, and dogbane. More problems with rust powder and mildew	
11	2008	May	Bill Haafke	Dakota	Dakota City	soil moisture & less imput cost	yes	went from 140.25 bushel-per-acre to 186.5	yes	wind erosion is non-existent	moisture is conserved year round and we irrigate less	putting corn into bean stubble	winter annuals are more prevalent	placement below the surface is important
12	2008	July	Rod Wheeler	Chase	Wauneta	saving moisture and tme	n/a	yes	yes	improved organic matter and controlled erosion	terraces catch less water and dry out sooner	planting wheat in drought years	n/a	
13	2008	Aug.	Milo Birkley	Dakota	Hubbard	soil conserves moisture and less erosion	fuel efficiency has increased and labor has decreased		yes	soil has finer texture and fewer lumps	moisture is conserved year round and we irrigate less	achieving a good stand	glyphosate is used to control grasses	
14	2008	Sept.	Larry & Paul Peterson	Dawson	Gothenburg	time management, three crops in two years	use less fuel	have seen 80-bushel beans	yes	no wind erosion and reduces erosion in steep cropland, seen improvement in overall health	there is a lower demand for water	getting through residue and obtaining insurance	the longer you no-till the less weed pressure you have, used to have a cocklebur problem	
15	2008	Oct.	Mark Weber	Gage	Adams	soil improvement and cost savings	yes	crops return higher yields	its helped profitability by saving fuel & labor	it will take a few years to see soil benefits	there is no question that it increases soil moisture	tree seedlings growing in fields and edges	more weeds in the spring, but are easily controled	
16	2008	Nov.	Dan Hassler	Dodge	Dodge	reduction in soil erosion and the increase in soil moisture	reduced labor and fuel costs	have stayed the same or increased	yes	no-till protects the soil and keeps nutrients in place	about 2 inches per year conserved	getting a good stand of corn	grasses were a problem, but that was solved with glyphosate	
17	2009	April	David Pieke	Madison	Newman Grove	saving soil from erosion	savings in equiptment purchases, repairs, fuel, and time	maintained yields	saving 70-100 dollars an acre	our biggest benefit is saving our soil from erosion	for every tillage trip you loose one inch or more of moisture	fertility	spray winter annuals before planting and sprays for insects	feeder roots are right under residue, using all the fertilizer
18	2009	May	Norman Bredthauer	Valley	Arcadia	soil preservation and organic matter	reduced fuel costs and labor	yes	no-till is more profitable	soil nutrients and biological activities have improved	reduced irrigation by 20%	weed pressure	more foxtail and other grasses	
19	2009	June	Gary & Lane Darnall	Banner	Harrisburg									

Other Nebraska Farmer Articles on No-Till Farmers

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	2005	March	Randy Rink	Thurston	Pender			Increase in yields		Increased organic matter helps build better soil structure	Increased residue helps retain moisture		No-till and crop rotaion helps break the pest cycle	
	2007	Jan.	Ed Luetkenhaus			prevent erosion and flooding			Incentives help maintain profits	residue helps prevent erosion	Has reduced runoff and risk of flooding			
	2007	Jan.	Duane Lange	Valley	Ord	Improve soil quality		average 20 bu per acre increase		organic matter is nearly at pre-plow levels	Increased residue has helped remove need for irrigation			
	2007	Nov.	Mark Watson	Box Butte		Saving on irrigation costs with increase in yield		yield is comparable to other dryland farms	Save $30 per acre in irrigation		No-tilling helps conserve ground water and reduces irrigation			
	2008	Jan.	Dan Gillespie	Madison		Cover crops help protect soils				increase organic matter and soil carbon		finding the best cover crop		
	2008	Nov.	Berns Brothers	Webster	Bladen	Helps reduce erosion				Builds soil organic matter	Root structure helps moisture penetrate soils			Cover crops replace N, reducing fertilizer