

Tips offered for no-till farming

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Thinking about reducing the amount of tillage done, but not sure how to go about it?

Does spending less money on diesel fuel for farming sound appealing?

These questions and more will be addressed at the “No-till and Cover/Alternative Crops” workshop. The workshop will be Feb. 15 at the Community Center in Haxtun. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. The workshop will run from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lunch (meat and Lent options) will be provided. There is no registration fee.

Keith Berns and his brother farm south of Hastings, Neb. at Bladen, Neb. They have been 100 percent continuous no-till for over 12 years. They have looked closely at cover crop water use and its affect on the following crop. They are both excited and encouraged at the results. Berns will share what they have learned about residue management and moisture efficiency in cover crops. For more information about cover crops, visit their website: greencoverseed.com .

Scott Ravenkamp has been continuous crop no-till farming since 1999. He became 100 percent no-till in the last four to five years. He has just started trying cover/alternative crops and livestock grazing. Farming in the Hugo area with a 14-inch rainfall, he is willing to try anything that makes some sense. Ravenkamp will share why he chose no-till, how he transitioned to it and why he continues to no-till. He will also share his 2012 experience with cover/alternative crops. Ravenkamp is currently the president of the Colorado Conservation Tillage Association.

The ins and outs of alternative crops and no-till will be the focus of Mark Watson’s discussion. Watson is a Nebraska no-till educator and long-time dryland and irrigated no-till farmer near Alliance, Neb. With the drought conditions, planting crops for forage instead of grain is worth considering, he said. Cropping options after irrigated winter wheat as another option for livestock feed will be explored. Watson will also share some planting equipment “tricks of the trade.” For more information about Watson and no-till, visit panhandlenotill.org .

Atwood, Kan. farmer Dietrich Kastens will talk about the economics around no-till rotations. The Kastens family has built their farming operation based on no-till with limited fallow. On their website (kastensinc.com/farminformation), they state, “The amazing part ... is that even

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though we are increasing cropping intensity (crops per years), our yields are actually going up substantially.” Kastens will share practical considerations when adopting or managing a no-till system. (Translate: how not to repeat the same stupid mistakes.)

The workshop will close with a panel of Eastern Colorado no-till farmers. They will share their no-till experiences and answer questions.

This workshop is sure to stir up some interesting ideas. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion.

There is no registration fee, but a reservation for lunch is suggested. Call 970-332-3173 ext. 3 or 970-854-2812 ext. 3 to save a plate. Reservations can also be made by email to julie.elliott@co.usda.gov by Feb. 8. Late registrations and walk-ins are welcome but will not be guaranteed lunch.

The Haxtun Conservation District, Sedgwick Conservation District, Yuma County Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are sponsoring this workshop.

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