
Department of Agronomy

Soil Science News & Views

Vol. 23, No.3, 2003

How Much No-Till Wheat is Planted?

Lloyd Murdock, Extension Soils Specialist

The Conservation Tillage Information Center reported that 27% of the wheat planted in Kentucky was no-tilled in 2000. The interest in no-tilled wheat has increased the last couple of years. To help gauge this interest, we surveyed farmers at a large wheat meeting.

A large percentage of wheat producers who attended the statewide meeting in January 2003, completed a survey on wheat tillage practices and reasons for the practices. This is not a proper scientific sampling on which to draw strong conclusions but the results were interesting.

Approximately 100 people attended the meeting and included professional agriculturalist as well as producers. Thirty six producers filled out the survey form. There were more producers present but due to a number of reasons several did not get a survey form. The results of the survey are found below.

Percentage of Producers Who No-Tilled Wheat

- 61% of respondents plant at least some no-till wheat
- 42% of respondents plant 100% of acreage no-till
- 41% of acreage is no-tilled (all respondents)
- 30% of respondents do not no-till but are considering it

The interest in no-till wheat seems to have increased. The producers that filled out the survey indicated 61% no-till wheat, 42% no-till 100% of their wheat and 41% of the wheat acreage represented on the forms was no-tilled.

Although this is not a scientific sample it does indicate that the interest in no-till wheat may have increased substantially since the 2000 survey.

The survey also asked the producers why they no-tilled wheat. They were given 5 choices and asked to mark the two most important. The responses are shown below

Cooperative Extension Service
U.S. Department Of Agriculture
University Of Kentucky
College Of Agriculture
Lexington, Kentucky 40546

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use, \$300

PRSR STD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
USDA
PERMIT NUMBER G268

Reason for Planting No-Till Wheat

Increased Yield – 2%
Increased Profit – 16%
Decreased Labor – 34%
Decreased Machinery – 25%
Saved Time – 23%

The saving of labor, time and machinery are the primary reasons producers are no-tilling wheat.

The survey also asked the producers that use tillage to plant wheat why they do not use no-tillage. They were given 5 choices and asked to mark the two most important. The responses are a reason was marked is shown below.

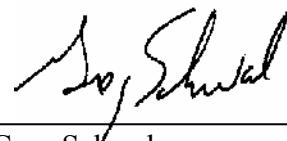
Reasons for Not No-Tilling Wheat

Decreased Yield – 45%
Decreased Profit – 9%
Increased Costs – 14%
Increased Management – 4%
Increased Freeze Damage – 14%
Decreased Stand – 14%

The main reason given for not using no-till plantings of wheat was decreased yields.

Summary and Conclusions

In 2000, the Conservation Tillage Information Center indicated that 25-30% of the wheat acreage in the state was no-tilled. The interest in no-till seems to have increased since that time. A recent survey at a statewide wheat meeting in 2003 indicates that the percentage of wheat that is no-tilled may have increased substantially.



Greg Schwab
Extension Soils Specialist