

Conservation Agriculture Systems Alliance

Conference Call

Tuesday, Oct 5

at 11 a.m. (eastern)

Participants:

Wade Thomason, Virginia Tech

Brian Lindley, No-Till on the Plains

Bill Kuenstler, NRCS

Susan Winsor, Corn and Soybean Digest

Angie Williams, CTIC

Karen Scanlon, CTIC

AGENDA

Proposal Update

NRCS did not award No-Till on the Plains the CIG proposal for CA certification program. No-Till continues to work with AAPRESID to develop the program. Currently reviewing a non-disclosure agreement. AAPRESID has certified 3000 acres; its program is ISO certified.

After the program is developed, CASA members will help fit program to their regions.

No-Till did receive a CIG (Oklahoma), in partnership with Geo Agro, for developing a “No-Till University,” which will offer degrees in no tillage. Will offer training to earn certificate / CEUs in no-till. Online training with on-the-ground experiences. Work begins this fall on the pilot.

Cover Crop Cocktails

BL: Greencoverseed.com (Keith and Brian Burns) developed a “smart mix calculator.” Seed varieties work in the Plains, not sure if will work elsewhere. Now working with Steve Groff and Jill Clapperton and others to expand the network and discuss this application elsewhere.

In 2006 NTOP bus tour visited North Dakota in a very dry year (<2 inches). Monocultures were dead. Blend plantings were still alive.

First question for grower: what do you want a cover crop to do?

Growers have concern about selection, balancing equipment, etc.

BK: Midwest Cover Crop Council is developing a matrix to assist in cover crop selection in each state. <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/>

Need to communicate between and among groups and geographies to share information and experience.

WT: Mid-Atlantic region does have some research on cover crops, but does not have a selection tool like these.

Dave Brandt, Ohio, has another method of planting different seed in different rows.

BL: As the cover crop movement grows, we will need readily available seed. CASA could be good place to exchange information and technology about this topic. CASA could help make sure NRCS and FSA communicating and not putting up barriers to cover crop adoption. Fruit and Vegetable Act (year?) limits where edible crops can be planted. (BK to provide more information.)

Answer to “not enough time to get cover crop established”? Improve management. Look at innovation out there and the growers making it work. High-boy equipment adaptations. Fly-on the seed. Relay cropping system to seed cover crop into growing crop.

How long to see return on investment? BL: Jill Clapperton said results in first year (not a season) to kick start biology. 2.5-3 years to see improvements in soil and result in reductions in fertility bill and even crop protection. Can also reduce water usage (in irrigated areas) and increase water use efficiency.

WT: in Bay watershed, interested in sediment retention and trapping nutrients. Only way to get farmers to continue to do that is to continue to pay them. Paying \$40/acre for rye cover crop. Increases nitrogen bill, more of an issue to deal with residue. Looking for other ways to get farmers to adopt and maintain. Backing off stringency of cover crop as N scavenger and high biomass. Going for other characteristics to offer more benefits. Requires ratcheting up the management of the system. Farmers must be better managers to take advantage of a cover crop system.

Member Update

Ohio No-Till Council: Dec. 7. Ohio No-Till Conf., featuring Ray Archuleta.

Our Sept 8 No-till field day was a successful program, excellent speakers and topics. However attendance was hurt by early corn and soybean harvest. Unbelievable. Of course harvest continued through our Farm Science Review, knocking attendance down about 15,000 below normal. We had a good cover crops demo area at FSR, and it attracted a lot of attention. About 10-12 different crops.

Virginia: VANTAGE (Virginia No-Till Alliance) started in Shenandoah Valley, grew this year to southeastern VA.

No-Till On the Plains: AIM Symposium based on holistic management in December; another about certified no-till grain on Jan. 27, 2011. Winter Conference will be Jan. 25-26, 2011, in Salina, Kan.

NRCS: Put in 3-year study at NRCS plant material center at Rose Lake to look at 20 different cover crops and two-species mixtures to learn more about biomass production and rooting depth. Will use information to develop new crop files for erosion prediction tools or reaffirm existing data and better understand how well these crops do in rooting depth and breaking compaction.

What's next?

Topics: What are the barriers to farmers adopting cover crops?

Invite MCCC, Dan Jaynes, Dan Towery, Lois Wright Morton (Leopold Center) and others to participate

Brian will invite a producer using cover Gail Fuller and Keith and Brian Burns

KAS send out CASA contact information for updates

Next call:

Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2011 @ 11 am eastern