SouthernLink Edition

SOUTHERNLINK

Sold on No-Till

Eliminating tillage helps save water and improve soil in the desert Southwest.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY J.T. SMITH

No-till saved Clay County, Texas, farmer Tommy Henderson's diverse operation for three drought stricken years. When some rainfall finally returned this year at midsummer, no-till was the key to helping capture what precious moisture came heading into fall.

"I'm sold on no-till; I think it's the only way to go," says Henderson, who farms in Byers, Texas. No-till breaks up his hard clay soils, increases organic matter and adds nitrogen. In his three extremely dry periods so common to north central Texas and makes the most of wetter times. For Henderson, no-till has come to mean the difference between having a crop or not having one.

BIG SWITCH. It's only been three years since Henderson made a major change and became a no-till wheat farmer. A total dryland farmer, he plants drought-tolerant crops, such as guar and sesame, in the spring. The residue of these crops captures limited rainfall more efficiently than if a field is left idle and provides a better environment for no-tilling the subsequent winter wheat crop.

A Texas A&M degree in agronomy instilled in Henderson a love of the soil, but the switch to no-till still required some assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "We needed their assistance because it is such a change from what we used to do," he says. "You really have to change your thought process, and that is difficult.

"No-till takes more management than plowing does, there's no question," he allows. "Timing is more critical." Weeds must be controlled at the optimum time. Seeding of crops into residue has to be precise to get good distribution. Harvest has to happen in time to get ready for the winter wheat crop.

It can also mean overcoming landlords about the advantages of leaving the previous crop's residue in the field. Henderson says no-till has already improved even his hardest clay soils.

SUMMER COVER-UP. In 2012, the wheat grower added summer cover crops of guar beans and sesame seed to his cropping system. Both crops are good for rotation and are also emerging as alternative cash crops.

Guar, a legume, helps fixate nitrogen in the soil. End uses include common products like cosmetics to chewing gum and ice cream. However, guar is increasingly sought after today for use in drilling ventures by the oil and gas industry to recover oil in hydraulic fracturing. Henderson ships guar to West Texas Guar, Inc., at Brownfield, Texas.

Sesame is widely recognized for aiding deep-root penetration and mellowing the soil. Henderson finds hard red winter wheat gets a big boost following sesame. He markets the crop through Sesaco, a processor and developer of sesame genetics.

Henderson also tried cowpeas as a cover crop on some acres in 2013. He says the cowpeas fit on fields where salinity is an issue.

PROBING FOR ANSWERS. Henderson routinely uses a soil pressure probe after harvest to determine if soils are loose enough to welcome new plant roots and capture soil moisture.

Despite receiving about 10 to 12 inches, or just half ▶

Tommy Henderson's John Deere air seeder plants every crop he grows with precision on his no-till farming operation, in Byers, Texas.

The Progressive Farmer SouthernLink Edition Expansion

FACTS:

- Southern Agriculture is increasingly important, especially in: Cotton, Corn, Soybeans, Wheat & Cattle
- Farmers in the South need dialogue focused on their specific crops and agronomic conditions that are unique to their geography.
- The Progressive Farmer is the most preferred publication in the South and has a Rich Heritage dating back to 1886, while serving more Farmers & Ranchers Nationally (Midwest, South & Southeast) than any other agriculture title.
- The Progressive Farmer reader surveys show southern readers want us to publish even more content specific to their cropping practices and challenges

DETAILS:

Available in all Regular Monthly Issues (11).

- Reaching 55,000 Row Crop Producers in 16 States.
- Page 4C: $6,269 net
- Select SouthernLink Covers and/or Cover Blurbs to be Split to Profile Southern Crops and Producers.
- Select TOC will also be split to offer editorial highlights.
- Advertising may be run to the full Southern edition or by specific crop demographic.
- Frequency Discounts will be offered for SouthernLink ad insertions w/ incentives for running in other editions including: National, Midwest, or other Geo/Demo placements.

EDITORIAL:

- Focus on cotton, corn, soybeans, wheat.
- In-depth coverage of crop management/production challenges specific to southern farmers.
- Additional topics will include soil management (tillage, soil health, conservation), irrigation, precision ag technologies and seed traits.
- Farmers talking to farmers.
- All southern sources (farmers, crop consultants, university specialists, industry).

GEO/DEMO EDITION CIRCULATION: 55,000 PRODUCERS:

State	Row Crop Acres		250+ acres Corn	250+ acres Soybean	250+ acres Wheat	250+ acres Cotton	250+ acres Rice
AL	1,605		649	726	441	1,104	0
AR	6,397		1,810	5,513	2,542	2,048	3,409
DE	333		316	317	124	0	0
FL	1,013		582	472	223	237	36
GA	3,391		1,326	1,009	994	2,561	0
KY	3,069		2,693	2,502	1,092	0	0
LA	3,452		1,451	2,317	796	1,491	1,145
MD	900		851	778	335	0	0
MS	3,718		1,586	2,916	990	2,241	819
MO (Bootheel)	2,589		1,506	2,060	869	632	383
NC	3,869		2,277	2,919	1,526	1,540	0
OK	5,665		878	941	5,480	561	0
SC	1,332		750	923	533	638	0
TN	2,843		1,659	2,218	1,092	1,106	99
TX	13,721		4,503	1,667	6,695	7,355	792
VA	1,296		915	983	539	268	0
Total	**55,193**		**23,752**	**28,261**	**24,271**	**21,782**	**6,683**