

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Service

NEWS

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FARMERS URGED TO LEAVE RESIDUES FOR SOIL PROTECTION FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are once again urging farmers to leave corn and soybean crop residue on top of the soil after harvest. The residues give needed topsoil protection against both wind and water erosion, according to USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

"We're especially concerned about stirring soybean residues," says SCS State Conservationist Mike Nethery. "There's no evidence that fall tillage of soybean land will increase yields next spring, so there is really no incentive to stir the soil. Any stirring, even one disking or running a chisel over the land, loosens that soybean land and buries protective residue."

Nethery says a disking or chiseling of corn residues on slightly or moderately sloping land is not as critical because there should still be enough residue for good soil protection. "Still, though, leaving all the residues alone in the fall gives the best soil protection. With the success no-till farmers are having now, why go to extra work in the fall and take a chance on erosion?" he asks.



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The number of farmers who would agree is growing, and they are becoming more visible and more vocal. Farmers in some counties of Iowa have formed "untillage committees" and "no-till" clubs; their primary goal is to encourage less tilling of the soil.

Soil conservation districts in Iowa have long advised against fall plowing. Many of the district leaders are pioneers of no-till farming, and have witnessed considerable topsoil savings in no-till farming compared to either plowing or reduced tillage methods. This past spring, when soil erosion was severe across the state, soil savings from no-till was evident. No-till farming can reduce soil losses from more than twice the "allowable" limits to well under the limits in many cases.

"We hope farmers will make the decision now that they won't till the ground this fall. Then they've got all winter to read and study more about reduced tillage systems," says SCS agronomist Bob Dayton. Dayton says the interest in no-till farming is phenomenal; he expects the number of Iowa farmers practicing it next year to be well above this year.

Leaving the residues untouched this fall keeps all the options open for no-till or other reduced tillage systems next spring.



No-tilled into corn stubble

THIS FARM FIELD in the Ryan area shows soybeans no-tilled into corn stubble. Delaware county and all Iowa farmers are urged to leave corn and soybean crop residue on top of the soil

after harvest which provides needed protection against both wind and water erosion, according to the Soil Conservation Service. (Press & D-R photo)

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Encourage farmers to leave residues for soil protection

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