

# The 2009 No-Till Innovator Awards



During the 18th National No Tillage Conference, Syngenta Crop Protection and *No-Till Farmer* magazine are proud to honor the 2009 No-Till Innovators.

No-till farming is widely considered to be an environmentally sound and economical method of crop management. The number of conservation tillage growers continues to increase, due in part to the endeavors of this year's award winners. Each has made important contributions to the conservation movement and was chosen based on dedication to the advancement of no-till farming, regardless of the type of crop grown and equipment, seed treatment or crop protection products used.

The following committee selected the 2009 No-Till Innovators:

**Mark Girard**, Marketing Development Manager, Syngenta Crop Protection

**Frank Lessiter**, Editor, *No-Till Farmer*, Brookfield, Wis.

**Dan Towery**, Ag Conservations Solutions, Lafayette, Ind.

**Keith Wendte**, Wendte Farms and CNH, Willowbrook, Ill.

## BROKAW SUPPLY COMPANY, DAVE NELSON

business  
& service



Dave Nelson is the owner of Brokaw Supply Company, a leading equipment distributor in Iowa. His company builds, modifies and sells strip-till applicators, along with fertilizer and anhydrous applicators. Nelson and his employees frequently visit with their growers experimenting with strip-till to evaluate their programs. They adjust equipment and fertilizer as needed to help improve each farm operation.

Nelson and the employees at Brokaw Supply Co. are committed to supplying their customers with much more than a piece of machinery. They're committed to delivering agronomics and their expertise, as well. They want their growers to succeed with strip-till, so just selling them a piece of iron is not their philosophy. With a program Dave started called "Operation Strip Till," growers are able to experience the advantages of strip-till on their farm before committing to the purchase. They'll work with growers to ensure they are using the equipment correctly and are properly managing fertilizer.

Nelson speaks at several grower meetings and demonstration days each year for Iowa State University Extension and Brokaw Supply Company, during which he discusses the economic and environmental advantages of strip-till. He delivers information and demonstrations about implementing strip-tillage, including auto-steer technology, economics and the benefits of improved soil quality.

## NO-TILL ON THE PLAINS

organization



No-till on the Plains, Inc., is a non-profit organization based in Wamego, Kan., that focuses on educating and providing growers with information about no-till and other sustainable farming techniques.

The organization is a partnership of farmers, agribusinesses, associations and state and federal agencies committed to increasing the adoption of cropping systems designed to enhance soil and water quality, economic

potential and quality of life. According to Brian Lindley, executive director for No-till on the Plains, the organization is devoted to educating farmers about how to develop economically, agronomically and environmentally sound crop production systems through the application of no-till farming techniques.

No-till on the Plains annually organizes educational bus tours and field days that allow growers to obtain practical and relevant no-till information from other farmers and no-till experts. In 1997, the organization hosted the first annual No-till on the Plains Winter Conference, which was designed to promote an information exchange among growers. More than 600 people attended the inaugural conference. Since then, the conference has been held each January in Salina, Kan., with an annual attendance of approximately 1,300 people.

## RULON ENTERPRISES, RODNEY RULON AND FAMILY

crop  
production



Rodney Rulon and his cousins, Ken and Roy, manage more than 5,300 acres of no-till corn and soybean on their family farm in Arcadia, Ind. Representing the fourth generation of farmers, the Rulons have been continuously no-tilling all their acres for the past 17 years and have seen tremendous economic and environmental benefits.

In 1992, the Rulons started no-tilling as a way to save on labor, equipment and fuel costs. It hadn't yet caught on in their area because nobody thought it would work. However, they immediately experienced benefits, including improved soil quality, erosion control and ultimately increased yields.

Over the last 17 years, the Rulons have worked to develop a no-till cropping system on their farm that is both environmentally and economically sustainable. This has included extensive use of site-specific technologies, enterprise management for tracking economic benefits, work with surface and sub-surface water management and many conservation practices, including nutrient management, buffer strips and cover crops. It is their opinion that in the long term, the most economic system will also be the most environmentally sustainable when all costs are considered.

## BARRY FISHER

research & education



Barry Fisher, state agronomist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Indiana, has been working with no-till since first experimenting with it as part of his college research curriculum 28 years ago. His current research efforts are focused on looking for solutions and technologies to help growers build a total conservation cropping system, which would include nutrient management

strategies and precision technology. The aim is to help improve soil, air and water quality.

According to Fisher, the biggest contribution he's made to no-till is building a network among farmers and researchers that puts strategies together that are practical for growers to implement on their own farms. Fisher typically presents at about 60 workshops each year through the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative with the NRCS.

Fisher carries a broad range of experience in no-till farming and consulting. Before his current role, he was the coordinator for the Indiana Conservation Tillage Initiative for four years. He served as a district conservationist in Putman County, Ind., for the 12 years preceding that.

**syngenta**

**F<sup>NO-TILL</sup>  
FARMER**

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