



Indiana's Conservation Tillage Initiative

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I am a long time no-till farmer. I am interested in selling carbon credits, but don't know where to start. I read the articles in Farm magazines and websites, but still need info. Please advise.

A. Carbon Trading is definitely a reality. Several groups across the U.S. have become aggregators, where they put large pools of land under contract. These farms/ farmers have voluntarily agreed to keep no-till type systems or other carbon sequestering practices in place for the contract period (usually 5+/- years). The aggregator pays a rate per acre or per carbon credit for the contract period. Once a pool of carbon credits is secured, the aggregator can offer these for sale through the Chicago Climate Exchange. These groups are generally established and legitimate organizations, however, are not affiliated with or backed by the USDA. One should read contracts carefully to assure the ability to fulfill their commitment.

Q. I'm converting to a no-till system and would like to upgrade my planter. What are some essentials for no-tilling in a wide range of soils?

A. Starting at the front of the planter and working to the back, I'd make sure the planter had a 2"x2" Starter placement system. This will need to be heavy enough to get the fertilizer placed evenly in all conditions. Next you should consider some type of floating row cleaner (residue movers, trash wheels, etc.). A wavy coulter is optional, but if used, it should be set to run no deeper than your double disk openers. Reduced Inner Diameter (RID) gage wheel tires are very effective at reducing sidewall compaction, especially in early planting and heavy soils. A seed firmer should accompany the RID gage tires. Spiked closing wheels are gaining in popularity among no-tillers and are beneficial in those earlier planting windows where the soil is cooler and wetter. If these are used then a wavy coulter ahead of the double disk openers is less beneficial. Adding spiked closing wheels will probably necessitate some kind of a drag chain or leveling device to assure even distribution of soil over the seed slot. One of the most beneficial items, is a note taped to your speedometer that says: "planting speed <5 mph". This one nearly always pays.

Q. What can I do about soil compaction in no-till?

A. Don't expect no-till to correct pre existing problems like soil compaction or pH. Always try to correct these prior to moving to a no-till system. Of course, sometimes, compaction can occur do to conditions beyond your control. An intervention such as the use of an inline ripper in the fall followed by the seeding of a cover crop may be the most sure and thorough cure. Think of the in-line ripper as the "drug" and the cover crop as the "vitamins" that boost health and prevent a recurrence.

Q. What if I need to run some kind of a tool in the spring to break the crust, or dry out the soil? Is this still no-till?

A. Yes and no. How's that for a definitive answer? Tools like a rotary harrow or vertical tillage tool (i.e. Phillips Harrow, Phoenix Harrow, AerWay, Turbo-Till, or Salford RTS) are not considered by NRCS to be No-Till under their Field Office Technical Guide (329-Residue and Tillage Management-No-Till/Strip/Till). There are considered under Mulch-Till Standard (345-Residue and Tillage Management-Mulch-Till) as a "modified no-till system. Many No-Tillers use these tools on an "as needed" basis to overcome difficult soil conditions, especially early in the system when crusting is most prevalent. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>

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