

Vertical Tillage One Topic At State Tillage Conference

URBANA, ILL.

After another wet fall and spring, corn and soybean farmers must decide what field tillage operations are essential before the 2010 crop season. "With wet fall seasons, there may be less tillage done prior to the next spring's planting. In this situation," says Tony Vyn, Purdue University agronomist, "farmers have fewer alternatives to consider." "One option for spring field preparation is vertical tillage – an operation in which producers use tools with straight coulters, harrows and rolling baskets in order to fluff up remaining surface crop residue with shallow soil penetration, without actually inverting the soil," he adds.

"Vertical tillage tools have the advantage of leaving more residue cover than a field cultivator or a disk, but less residue cover than an undisturbed no-till operation," Vyn said. "This operation is best suited for fields that are poorly drained or have high clay content and therefore dry more slowly in the spring."

Vyn will be one of the featured nationally and state recognized speakers at the 2010 Illinois Tillage Seminar scheduled for January 26 in Peoria. Persons interested in attending should go to [http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/rockford-](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/rockford-center)

center for how to register either by mail or online, or phone 815-395-5710. Advance reservations are required by January 19 with the \$25.00 per person registration fee.

Vyn said that whatever tillage operation is chosen, it's of utmost importance to wait for dry enough soil conditions and to keep all operations shallow.

"If we continue to deal with wet spring conditions, soil moisture will increase very quickly with depth, which means that deep tillage operations in spring could cause smearing and compaction," he said. "The combination of smearing and compaction is always going to be more of an issue when the soil conditions are reasonably wet at the time of tillage, and when dry, warm conditions persist after doing the operation."

"The worst possible combination would be doing the tillage when the soil is wet and having that followed by a hot, dry spring. So a big part of tillage is trying to make sure you limit soil damage and creation of any root-restricting layers during that operation. That way, you give the maximum potential for unimpeded root development after tillage and planting." Δ



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