

1990 Southern Region Conservation Tillage Conference Steering Committee

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Conservation Tillage for Agriculture in the 1990's

Proceedings of the 1990 Southern Region Conservation Tillage Conference

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FOREWORD

Conservation tillage is a farming practice that has matured since its inception during the 1960's and is sure to contribute significantly to agriculture during the years ahead. Researchers as well as thousands of farmers in the southern region have helped in the understanding of important scientific principles and in putting this knowledge into practice. From the beginning the concept of conservation tillage has been perceived as a cost-effective method of meeting crop production goals and at the same time conserving soil and water resources.

In North Carolina conservation tillage farming is currently being applied on well over one million acres. In addition, conservation tillage practices are helping many farmers to address the important conservation provisions of the 1985 farm bill. These practices fit well into the conservation farm plans required to be in place by 1990 and in the subsequent implementation of the plan by 1995.

As we look ahead to the 1990's and beyond to the 21st century, it seems certain that issues just now emerging will be the dominate force influencing agricultural policy makers. The issues of food safety, environmental quality and the sustainability of agriculture will be among the most important.

Perhaps more than any other farming practice, conservation tillage stands ready to address the concerns of a "sustainable agriculture." The need to respond to the issues surrounding the loosely defined concept of sustainable agriculture will probably require an ever closer link between research, extension and farmers than exists today. It is clear that sustainable agriculture of the future must address the environmental and social expectations of society as well as assure the economic success of farmers. This will require that farmers gain a better understanding of the biological principles that provide the basis for agriculture. To this end, regional conferences that address research needs and act as important methods for exchange among scientists, agricultural industry personnel and farmers are of great benefit. It is our hope that the information contained in this bulletin will provide useful information and at the same time be thought provoking; stimulating new ideas and approaches for overcoming the many problems that confront today's farmers.

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