REDUCED TILLAGE PRODUCTION IN THE NORTHEASTERN COASTAL PLAIN OF NORTH CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 10 years, farmers in Halifax County have made an almost complete change from conventional tillage in cotton and peanuts to strip till. During that time many growers tried a lot of methods to reduce trips, reduce erosion and improve their soils to meet requirements for Highly Erodible Land (HEL). Many farmers tried terracing, building diversions and waterways, but this required a lot of time and money to install these practices. Cover crops were also a requirement for HEL as a means to reduce erosion during the winter months. Slowly, but surely growers started seeing the results of no-till and strip-till in some areas of the county. Extension conducted several on-farm test plots to compare tillage methods in peanuts and cotton. The results showed that these crops could be produced with comparable and sometimes higher yields than conventional. Each year, more and more producers turned to strip-till as their preferred method of planting. Today, it is estimated that 80% of our cotton is either strip-tilled or no-tilled and although peanut acres are dwindling due to the change in the program most of them are now strip-tilled. Grant Staton, a farmer from Scotland Neck has made a successful transition from conventional to stale seed bed to 100% strip-till in his cotton and peanut crop. Soybeans are either strip-tillled or no-tilled. He will provide insight on the change in tillage on their farm along with the problems he's had and how they are dealing with those.