Mulch Planting of Corn

Corn Pays Off

Reports from six states show 110-bushel yields, lower labor costs, improved soil and higher profits.

By JOHN STROM

With May Revolutionist the Way You Grow Corn? That's what we want to know about mulch planting in Feb., 1932. Here's a progress report from 6 states, including color photos of Dr. George Searns's work in Tennessee Co., Ind.: High yields: Fifteen mulch-planted fields on both corn and soybean yielded an average of 34 bushels of corn per acre this year, despite drought damage. For example: Searns's corn made 99.8 bu., although dry weather and excessive heat delayed a potential 130-bu. crop. A Wisconsin mulch-planted field yielded 158 bu. per acre this year; 130 bu. last year. Funk's Research Acres, Clinton Co., Ill., reported mulch-planted corn yielded 12.5 to 125 bu. per acre. Most farmers and experiment stations say mulch-planted corn will yield as much as corn planted the conventional way, over a period of years. Some say it will yield more. “And mulch planting is worth MORE even if it yields somewhat LESS, because of other benefits,” suggests Dr. George Pickard, Illinois agronomist.

Less labor: George Searns grew corn with 3-man tractor-hours for labor per acre, compared with 10 hours it takes average farmer—that's less than 2 minutes per bushel, compared with 13 minutes for average. Figuring $4 an hour for man and tractor, he saved $234 an acre—enough to pay for extra fertilizer to boost yield from 25 to 100 bu. per acre.

Erosion control: This is listed "most important" by ag researchers. Example: A heavy 2½-inch rain fell 10 days after corn planting on a U. of Wisconsin test field with 12 to 14% slope. On the mulch-planted portion, there was no runoff, no soil lost.

Continued on Page 31

Mulch Planting of Corn

Continued from Page 31

Where corn was planted in conventional way, runoff measured 1¼" and 10 tons of soil was lost per acre, reports Dr. Art Peterson. Mulch planting saves both soil and water, farmers and researchers agree.

Improved soil: After 3 years of continuous corn planted with mulch tine, “soil structure is distinctly improved” in Illinois tests, reports Dr. George Pickard. Reason: Plowing, harrowing, disking and excessive cultivation break down soil structure and heavy machinery compacts soil. There are 4 or 5 fewer “passes” over the land with mulch planter.

More profits: Farmers report higher profits with mulch planting for these reasons: 1. High yields. 2. Lower labor and machinery costs. 3. Because of increased soil productivity through better tillage and erosion control, land can grow more crops of corn over period of years—thus put more dollars in farmer’s pocket.

Glenn Bunting, Lake Co., Ill., whose corn made over 130 bu. per acre this year says: “I wouldn't sell my mulch planter for $15,000, if I couldn’t buy another.”

Farmers report these disadvantages: It increases weed problem, some think. It takes a big tractor to pull it. Planter is only a 2-row machine. Ohio state tests showed yield reductions during drought years. But because of widespread farm interest, International Harvester plans to make a number of the machines for sale next year.

As Emmett Fruin, Illinois farm manager, observes: “The mulch planter is very promising because we’re now using too much power and machinery to plant corn. And the erosion control it gives is an extra dividend.”

THE END