

**Indiana
Conservation
Partnership**



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NEWS RELEASE

Indiana Farmers Changing to No-Till

INDIANAPOLIS, April 28, 2008—Data from the 2007 Indiana Cropland Tillage Transect Survey has been tallied and shows more Hoosier farmers are shifting to no-till farming. Final results indicate that no-till corn jumped from 19% in 2004 to 27% in 2007. No-till soybeans went from 61% in 2004 to 69% in 2007. Estimated soil loss reduction from the increase in no-till systems alone is more than one million tons annually in Indiana.

“Thanks to our many partners across Indiana who participated in the survey, we now have an accurate assessment of how we are managing our farms and protecting our natural resources,” said Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman. “This information will help us continue Indiana’s progress in conservation tillage.”

“No-till and strip-till farming can have a huge impact on controlling erosion and building organic matter,” said Barry Fisher, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state agronomist and former Indiana Conservation Tillage Initiative Coordinator. “The survey confirmed for us that farmers are willing to make changes and adopt new management systems if we put technical support and program support within their reach. The transects show more no-till adoption in areas where the local Conservation Partnership staffs have made assistance and information available through no-till workshops, field days, EQIP, and partnerships and grants in watershed efforts like the St. Joseph watershed in the northeast, Sand Creek watershed in the southeast, Upper Eel River watershed in the southwest, and Tippecanoe watershed in the northwest.”

By compiling the tillage data, the Indiana Conservation Partnership can tell how much progress is being made in adoption of Conservation Tillage systems, and where further adoption can help protect soil and water resources. Conservation tillage is not just no-till, but includes any system that leaves 30% or more residue coverage on the soil surface in crop fields when measured in the spring before planting.

“These are significant changes,” says NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. “In the short term, reducing soil erosion by a million tons is making the water cleaner in

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our lakes, streams and rivers. That water is used by people for drinking and recreation. It also affects aquatic habitats here in Indiana, and every place it touches all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. In the long term, the change adds names to an ever-increasing list of farmers who are saving time, saving energy, and saving money. At the same time they improve soil and water resources in their communities and beyond.”

A transect is a survey of randomly selected farm fields, used to compile statistics on just what types of tillage systems Indiana farmers use. The transects were initiated because conservation tillage systems have more potential than anything else to affect soil erosion, water quality and long term productivity of soils in the intensive cropping systems that are prevalent in Indiana agriculture.

The Cropland Tillage Transects began in 1990 as a joint effort of the Indiana Conservation Partnership members. The surveys are done by teams made up of staff from:

- Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts,
- USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service,
- Purdue University’s Cooperative Extension Service, and
- Division of Soil Conservation - Indiana State Department of Agriculture (DSC-ISDA).

The data is compiled by DSC-ISDA and is available on their Web site at <http://www.in.gov/isda/2355.htm>.

More than half of the land of the state is used for intensive crop production. Only one state has a higher percentage of prime farmland soils than Indiana’s 66%, and that is Illinois at 67%. Among Indiana’s most valuable resources, prime farmland soils are those designated as most productive and with the fewest limitations for growing crops.

Fisher adds, “The more Conservation Tillage there is, the more protected our soil resources are, the less soil erosion we’ll have, and the cleaner our surface waters will be. Reducing erosion becomes more important when you realize that soil particles can also have fertilizer and other farm chemicals attached to them. These crop inputs are increasingly more expensive and are best kept on the land where they can be used by crops. Too much sediment will damage and disrupt the biology of streams, lakes, and rivers. We want to do all we can to keep sediment out of the water and keep topsoil on the land where it is productive.”

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