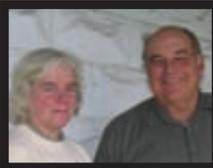


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Duo's goal: more no-till corn acres

By TOM J. BECHMAN

INDIANA'S conservation partners have teamed up again. They're rekindling the effort to increase no-till corn acres in Indiana. This time they've enlisted not one but two seasoned conservation veterans. Hans Kok and Dan Towery are coordinators of Indiana's new Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative.

Just launched weeks ago, it's a joint effort by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others. Purdue University Extension will also provide expertise.

"Our goal is to help soil and water conservation districts get more cover on the ground," Kok says. "We will encourage farmers to practice continuous no-till and to increase use of cover crops."

Towery adds, "We want to show farmers how they can utilize cover crops to make their farming system more efficient. It's not just about saving soil — it's about capturing nutrients, too."

Rich history

Kok and Towery have big shoes to fill. This latest conservation effort grew out of the Conservation Tillage Initiative, which brought no-till programming back to many conservation field days.

Key Points

- Indiana conservation partners launch a new conservation tillage initiative.
- Boosting no-till corn acreage is one of the initiative's goals.
- Expect to hear how you can use cover crops to capture nutrients.

Barry Fisher, now state agronomist for NRCS, led that effort. Within the span of a few short years, he became one of the most requested speakers at field days in Indiana.

His no-nonsense style and wealth of knowledge about what it takes to make no-till work in various situations have endeared him to farmers. Fisher will still help tell the no-till story, but he's turning the reins of leadership over to Kok and Towery.

"They will be the spokespersons as they try to churn up more excitement for no-till systems," Fisher says. "They'll also suggest cover crops and other practices that make it a system, not just a tillage choice."

Future goals

The Internet will help Kok and Towery magnify what they can accomplish by themselves. They're beefing up the Web site to promote this new initiative. It's still under development, but watch for it — it's coming soon. Once the Web site is active, the address will be published

READY TO ROLL: A good stand of aerially seeded annual ryegrass in cornstalks is a great setting for Hans Kok (right) and Dan Towery, leaders of Indiana's newest conservation tillage initiative.



on www.IndianaPrairieFarmer.com.

Kok has spent his career both in the herbicide industry and teaching at universities. Towery was coordinator for the Conservation Tillage Information Center in West Lafayette for many years. He maintains a conservation consulting business in addition to assisting Kok with the new initiative.

Expect to see Kok and Towery at farmer meetings this winter. The project is currently scheduled to last one to three years, and both are hoping they can continue the effort beyond that time period.

If you have questions about no-till systems, contact them at hans-kok@iaswcd.org or dan-towery@iaswcd.org.



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