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Cal Thorson, Manitoba-North Dakota Zero Tillage Farmers' Association

Work with Nature - Don't Beat Her Back

At the dawn of civilization, tillage was essential to tame nature's inclination to repossess the land. The development of science and technology over several millennia has allowed farmers to increase sod-busting capabilities and offered new ways to tame nature throughout the world.

As nature fought to reclaim her natural equilibrium, more technology (pesticides, fertilizers, seeds, etc.) was developed to beat nature back. Many regions of the world were lost to desertification (the degradation of land in arid and dry sub-humid areas) due to man's misunderstanding of the importance of natural processes.

Today, farmers have a better understanding of nature's biological systems. Many producers use modern production systems such as no-till that mimic and enhance nature's biological systems. For example, zero-soil-disturbance farming systems permit crops to utilize every raindrop, instead of tilling them away.

Without tillage, natural soil biology is being re-established to support the symbiotic relationships that provide increased natural nutrients for plants. This is also supported by improved crop sequences that help restore nature's plant diversity, which, in turn, increases yields and reduces pesticide needs.

The production systems we are developing today can exist in harmony with nature. To survive as farms grow larger, we must improve our time management skills and reduce the cost of off-farm inputs. We can accomplish these goals by working with nature in a no-till production system and learning from each other.

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