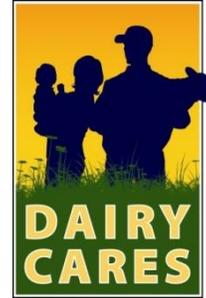


Funding provided by:



Dairy Cares Newsletter

August 2014

DairyCares.com

Dairy farmers experiment with conservation tillage, share lessons on environmental, economic benefits

Innovation and dairy farming in California go hand-in-hand. With advancements in [air and water quality protection](#), [crop nutrient management](#), and [animal health, housing and nutrition](#), dairy families in the Golden State are recognized the world over as leaders in sustainable farming.

Innovation continues today, with an increasing number of dairy farmers experimenting with an alternative farming method known as conservation tillage.

Conservation tillage is a method of low-impact farming that leaves crop stubble on the surface of the soil, with farmers planting new crops right on top of plant material left behind from the previous crop. The remaining crop residue protects the soil from erosion and prevents wind from blowing dirt into the air. Conservation tillage also requires fewer tractor passes to prepare a field for planting, reducing labor costs, equipment wear and tear, and diesel consumption and emissions.

Hanford dairy farmer [Dino Giacomazzi](#) was an early adopter of conservation tillage, implementing the practice nearly ten years ago on a small portion of his 900-acre cropland. A decade's worth of research, practice and experience has Giacomazzi utilizing conservation tillage techniques on all of his cropland today.

“There’s an environmental and economic benefit to it,” said Giacomazzi, who’s even written a [Conservation Tillage Guide](#) based on his experience. In the guide, he outlines his conservation tillage system, technologies necessary for implementation, and considerations for transitioning to such a system. Giacomazzi also emphasizes that there’s no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to conservation tillage.

“What I do on my farm works for my specific situation, and like all farming, things are constantly changing and every practice does not work for every field,” said Giacomazzi. “My hope is that I’ve created a guide to help farmers understand a systems approach to conservation tillage that will fit their farming and animal health goals.”

Implementing conservation tillage requires specialized farming equipment, necessitating additional investment by farmers. A new rental program, offered by [Sustainable Conservation](#) and [California Ag Solutions](#), allows farmers to try conservation tillage with the appropriate equipment prior to investing in equipment of their own. A recent [article](#) by Cecilia Parsons on behalf of Sustainable Conservation outlines the equipment rental program and benefits to farmers and the environment.

California dairy families' long history of innovation and progress has brought us where we stand today: the number-one milk producing state in the U.S., with more than 21 percent of the country's total milk production. As consumers continue to enjoy affordable, nutritious and safe dairy foods, they can do so with confidence that dairy families continue to explore and implement sustainable practices, so that their farms may thrive and provide continued benefits to the local environment and economy.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen's Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD, Inc., Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Merck Animal Health, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairywomen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit DairyCares.com or call 916-441-3318.