

## Direct Seeding on My Farm

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My presentation this afternoon is “direct seeding on my farm”. I farm with my wife, Iv, at Nokomis. We seed 2000 acres and grow wheat, barley, canola flax, peas and hay. Annually we have  $\frac{1}{2}$  of our acres into cereals,  $\frac{1}{4}$  into oilseeds and  $\frac{1}{4}$  into pulses. Our soil ranges from a clay loam to sandy loam to sand.

For many years we were the traditional  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  farmers. Our seeding tool in those days was a 24 ft. John Deere hoe drill which was usually followed up with a rod-weeder. With the increase of fertilizer use came the stubble cropping, but with seven inch spacings on the drill, several workings were needed to be able to get through the trash.

In 1982 we purchased a Frigstad air-seeder solving the problems of trash clearance and also reducing the number of cultivations associated with the drill. Our rotations were extended even further to a point where we were seeding  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our acres and summerfollowing the rest. Our field operations consisted of fall deep banding fertilizer, a spring cultivation, seeding with the air-seeder followed by a harrow packer.

Late in 1993 my father passed away leaving me with the field work of 1994. We had been looking for another method of farming and had attended SSCA’s conferences in the past, but it wasn’t till after the 1994 season we became very serious about direct seeding.

There were many reasons that direct seeding appealed to us. With the light textured soils that we have, the one pass operation retained the trash and kept the soil from blowing. Good surface soil moisture at seeding time meant shallower seeding depths which also meant quicker germination. Less operations meant less time spent in the tractor translating to less hours on the tractor. The cost of fuel was ever increasing, becoming a major part of input costs.

Early in 1995 we traded our air-seeder and harrow packer bar off on a used air drill. That first year was quite a challenge. It was cool and weed growth was slow. Watching all the neighbors doing their tillage passes and seeding left me wondering if I had made the right decision. Pre seeding burn off meant that I was waiting for weed growth until a friend advised me to go ahead and seed and spray before the crop emerged. My fuel dealer one day asked me after he had topped up the storage tanks when we were going to start seeding? At that point we were almost done, and he informed us that we had only used about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the fuel we usually used.

The second year I was looking for an add-on system to increase the capacity of my drill. I had only been getting 20-25 acres per fill and spent a lot of the time filling. I had heard about the use of liquid kits adapted to air drills as well as anhydrous ammonia. After researching we purchased a Dickey-John anhydrous applicator and increased the acres per fill.

During the last eight years we’ve learned a number of things. Your soils will change for the better. Soil will become very mellow, no driving across fields with loaded trucks of fertilizer or grain. The time and machinery saving is incredible. Less hours, less fuel, more savings. The

moisture retention is noticeable from the start: more moisture, more production, better returns. The weed spectrum changes: dandelion, narrow-leaved hawk's beard, Canada thistle are more prevalent, but with crop rotations and more specified chemicals on the market, these can be kept in check.

Last, but most important, is SSCA. They have been most helpful as a resource. When you come upon a problem and you need expert advice they are always as close as the telephone.