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A Supplement To The News-Banner & Sunriser News September 2023



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Electric tractors: the future of farming technology?

Electricity-powered tractors are increasingly showing up on farms in the United States and Canada. Here are some reasons why this technology is the way of the future.

- They're cleaner to operate. Unlike diesel, electric tractors don't

produce harmful CO2 emissions or other air pollution. This makes them better for the environment. Farmers also don't have to worry about inhaling toxic fumes while working in enclosed spaces like dairy barns.

- They run more quietly. Diesel tractors produce over 85 decibels of noise, which has been proven to cause permanent hearing damage over time. Electric tractor motors are extremely quiet and produce almost no noise. On top of safeguarding farmers' hearing, electric tractors

can make it easier for workers to communicate with each other, ultimately creating a safer work environment.

- They're cheaper to run. Electricity is a fraction of the cost of diesel. Solar panels can also power electric tractors. Therefore, farmers don't have to worry about the extreme price fluctuations of fossil fuels.

- They're more efficient. Electric tractors are much more efficient than diesel models because all the energy goes into work. In a diesel tractor, much of the energy is wasted as heat. Additionally, electric motors have massive torque at low speeds.

- They require less upkeep. Electric trac-

tor engines have fewer moving parts than diesel ones, requiring little maintenance. There's no engine oil to replace, oil filters to change, or engine tune-ups to schedule. Even the batteries are projected to last about 10 years, depending on operating cycles and depth of discharge.

Although electric tractors weren't an option for most farmers until recently, many big brands are coming out with affordable and practical electric tractors, including John Deere. Many of their models also allow autonomous operation, which increases efficiency and precision.



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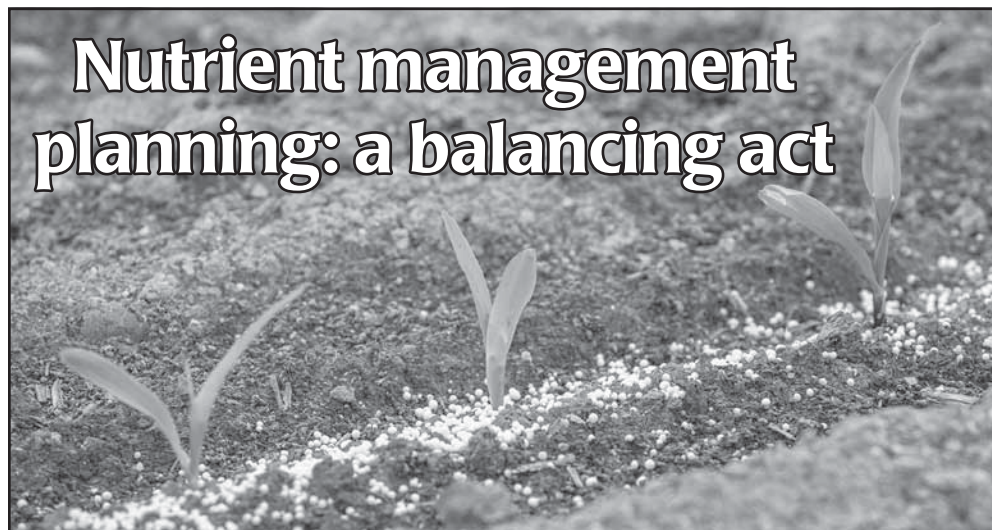
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Nutrient management planning: a balancing act

Nutrient management is a practice that aims to optimize crop yield and quality, minimize fertilizer costs and protect soil and water. It involves applying the correct type of nutrient sources — like synthetic fertilizer or manure — in the right amount, place, and at the best time. Here's a look at how farmers manage this delicate balancing act.

The right amount

When determining the amount of nutrients to add to the soil, the first step is to estimate how much is required for a target yield. This relies on understanding how crops respond to fertilizer under different conditions. Farmers must also consider the projected selling price.

Additionally, farmers must determine the current nutrient level in the field through soil testing. The right amount of fertilizer to add is determined by calculating the difference between the requirement for a target yield and the nutrients already in the field.

The right nutrient

Once farmers establish the nutrients to be added to the field, they must choose the best fertilizer product. Most farmers consult a professional agrologist or crop specialist for recommendations.

The right place

Nutrients must be placed as close as possible to the growing plant without damaging the crop. The greater the distance between the plant and the fertilizer,

the greater the chance it'll be lost before it can be absorbed.

The right time

Fertilizers should be applied as close as possible to when plants need them. Crops need the most nutrients during their fastest growth and seed production.

Understanding the principles behind nutrients and incorporating them into farm management is crucial to environmental sustainability.

The benefits of using algae fertilizer on large-scale farms

Over the past few years, environmental sustainability has taken center stage in agriculture. In the search for replacements for chemical fertilizers, algae has emerged as a safe and effective alternative.

As a living organism, algae is rich in macronutrients, micronutrients and growth regulators that benefit plants and soil. These nutrients can help improve the growth and yield of various crops. For example, there are multiple types of algae with different beneficial properties. Brown and red algae, for example, are rich in potassium to help enhance root growth and support water uptake into the plant.

Algae is also a great

source of organic matter. The organic matter formed from decaying algae gets mixed into the soil, improving characteristics like carbon content and nitrogen fixation. It can also

help bind the soil and increase its water retention capacity.

Biofertilizers like algae play an essential role in the shift toward more sustainable food-producing practices.



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Do laser scarecrows work?



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Stationary scarecrows dressed up to look like humans have long been used to keep birds out of farmers' fields. However, there's now a new type of scarecrow on the block. This system, invented by Rebecca Brown, professor of plant sciences at the University of Rhode Island (URI), uses constantly moving beams of green laser light to frighten birds from attractive crops like sweet corn and sunflowers.

How does it work?

The laser scarecrow is housed inside a plastic bucket that protects it from the elements. It's attached to an adjustable pole to set the laser at the same height as the crop. The lasers cover a section of 185 metres on one side and then scan back and forth, scaring the birds off.

Is it more effective?

Birds have excellent eyesight and can quickly identify and ignore deterrents like scary-eyed balloons and effigies. However, studies indicate that birds don't become acclimated to the laser scarecrow and, instead, become more afraid of it with repeated exposure. Flocking birds like blackbirds, cedar waxwings, cormorants, cowbirds, geese, gulls, robins and starlings appear most affected by the technology.

This laser scarecrow has already been tested on numerous fields across the United States, and the results are promising. The URI team continues to refine the laser in hopes of creating a commercially available product soon.

Photo: www.uri.edu

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Why is strip tilling making a comeback?

For years, farmers have actively tilled fields. However, some producers have recently embraced no-till farming to increase soil health and sustainability. However, did you know there's a third possibility? Strip tilling is making a comeback in farming. Here are a

few reasons why.

What is it?

Strip tilling is a bridge between conventional and no-till farming. It's the process of cultivating narrow-width strips, typically in the fall, to promote early spring soil moisture evaporation and soil warmth in the top two inches.

Advantages of strip-tilling

The practice of strip-

tilling breaks up compacted soil, allowing for better water and air movement. This process poses the following benefits for crop production:

- It allows farmers to seed crops earlier rather than wait several days for the wet soil to dry out after conventional tillage.

- It creates an ideal seedbed, which improves germina-

tion rates. This enables the plant to grow with fewer impediments, allowing it to focus its energy on yield.

- It improves soil health. Less tillage allows earthworms and other soil organisms to thrive, increasing the soil's capacity to grow more nutrient-dense crops. A healthy soil biome is also important for nutrient cycling and suppressing plant diseases.

- It allows farmers to place fertilizer more precisely. Fertilizer can be placed beneath the surface of the soil, directly near the plant roots, for optimal nutrient availability. Plus, the risk of runoff is reduced.

- It's ideal for light, erodible soils. Tilling only small strips of soil

enables enough crop residue to remain on the inter-row soil surface to prevent erosion. The residue blanket also conserves soil moisture.

- It saves time and money while still returning good yields. Farmers don't have to spend nearly as much time in their tractors, so they reduce wear and tear on their expensive machinery. Plus, they can trim their fuel bills with fewer field passes. In fact, research from the University of Minnesota in 2019 showed that strip-tilling saved farmers \$19.50 per acre on average compared to traditional disk plowing.

As you can see, strip tillage can be successful for farmers if they're willing to adapt to the change.



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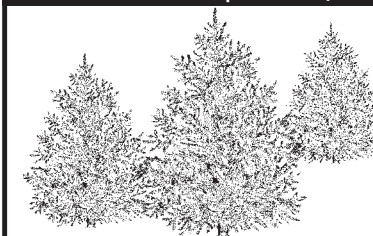


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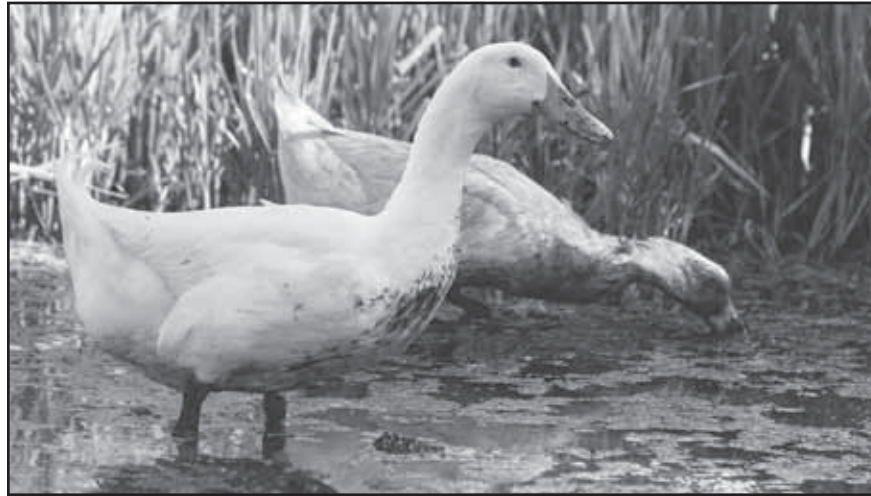
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The advantages of ducks in rice farming

In many irrigated rice areas worldwide, rice farmers rely heavily on synthetic pesticides to eliminate disease and get better rice yields. However, these practices are expensive, bad for the environment and potentially hazardous to health.

Recently, many rice farmers have turned to ancient wisdom and have begun integrating ducks into their farming operations. This practice was first documented in China over 600 years ago. It involves herding ducks into rice fields before harvest to increase crop yields. Here are just some of the benefits:

- Ducks serve as natural de-weeders, reducing the need for manual weeding
- Duck droppings fertilize the crop in place of chemical fertilizers
- Ducks eat harmful pests, so



chemical pesticides aren't needed

- The ducks' movements provide aeration, which increases the availability of nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorous and potash

Integrated rice-duck farming drastically reduces farm and labor inputs, minimizing the cost

of production and increasing productivity. In fact, rice-duck farming technology can increase rice productivity by 20 percent and farmers' net profit by 50 percent.

Several online videos show how this fascinating practice works. Check them out for yourself!



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