Four-row Nodet planter lays down two strips of plastic, then "punches" individual kernels through the plastic in a once-over operation.

ADDS 15 DAYS TO GROWING SEASON

Growing Corn Under Plastic

"We think this idea, which can add 15 or more days to the growing season, has widespread application for expanding corn growing areas throughout the world, including the U.S. and Canada," reports Dominique Lemaire, sales manager for the Huard Co. in France, developer of a special planter for growing corn (for grain or silage) under plastic.

Huard has developed a special 4-row planter which rolls out the plastic strips and punches corn kernels through the plastic and into the ground in a once-over operation.

"The idea behind the plastic is to trap heat and speed germination, growth and maturity of the crop. We're not using the plastic itself for weed control," explains Lemaire. "We fertilize and spray to control weeds before laying down the plastic. If needed during the growing season, we go in and spray for weeds right over the plastic."

The plastic strips are about 4 ft. wide and the corn rows about 40 in. apart. During planting, the edges of the plastic strips are covered with a 12 in. wide strip of dirt scooped up from the row middles by special disks on the planter. The plastic is worked into the soil after harvest where it quickly degrades and new plastic is laid down as each new corn crop is planted.

Advantages cited for growing corn under plastic include 3 to 5% faster germination, and 13 to 21 days earlier maturity. "In France, there appears to be more advantages with plastic in growing corn for silage rather than for grain," Lemaire told FARM SHOW. "At 80 days after planting, corn grown under plastic is generally about 3 ft. taller than corn grown without plastic."

The planter is a Nodet air planter, modified to "punch" individual kernels through the plastic film. It plants four rows and lays down two strips of plastic on each pass. Since first introducing the idea five years ago, Huard has produced about 100 planters which this year will plant an estimated combined total of about 30,000 acres of corn under plastic throughout France.

Cost of the plastic is right at $13 per acre. The four-row planter equipped for laying down the plastic strips retails for about $10,000.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Huard, Rue Des Vauzelles, Chateaubriant, 44110, France.

Edges of the 4 ft. wide plastic strips are covered with a 12 in. wide strip of dirt, making them appear narrower than they really are.

NEW "BREAKTHROUGH" MANAGEMENT TOOL

On-Farm Tester For Butterfat

"We think most dairymen using this new tester can boost their herd's butterfat average substantially within the first 12 months," says Raymond McAneny, export manager for Agrofarm, a Danish company that chose the Sima show in Paris to unveil its new "breakthrough" management tool for dairymen.

The milk fat indicator gives a fast, accurate test of either raw or homogenized milk in less than a minute. You simply put a small 3 oz. sample of milk into the battery-operated tester, push a button and presto! Fat content of the sample is displayed right before your eyes on the dial of the tester.

Retail cost of the unit is expected to be right at $385, according to McAneny. Agrofarm, veteran manufacturer and marketer of grain moisture testers in Europe, has appointed a distributor in the U.S. who will begin marketing the device on a limited basis this summer. Full scale production and marketing is slated to begin this fall.

The patented (applied for) new tester uses ultraviolet light and mirrors to determine fat content of milk samples. It's been field tested the past two years, scoring 99.98% for accuracy, says McAneny.

"This new management tool allows you to pinpoint the fat content of individual cows throughout an entire lactation, and from one lactation to another. It allows you to immediately pinpoint the effect of new rations, feed additives and other factors on fat content. If a high producing cow's milk shows a sudden drop in fat content, it may be an early clue to mastitis or some other serious problem. And, in selling milk on the basis of butterfat content, you can quickly and accurately check each lot to make sure you're being paid for full measure," McAneny points out.

New Agrofarm tester uses ultraviolet light to determine fat content of raw or homogenized milk.

Contact: Neal Whitney, Agrofarm Distributor, SI Mfg., P.O. Box 68, Spencerville, Ohio 45887 (ph 419 647-4444).

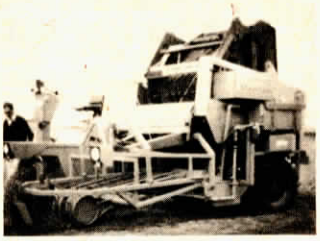
Self-Propelled Big Balers

Two exhibitors at the Sima show introduced conventional pull-type big balers which had been converted into self-propelled machines.

"We've sold about 10 converted balers throughout France," Jean Hamman, sales manager for Rivierre Casalis, of Orleans, Cedex, France, told FARM SHOW. Casalis, a major manufacturer of big balers in Europe, buys the conversion kit from a firm in Belgium. Power is provided by a 60 hp. Deutz diesel engine.

"Most of the initial interest in self-propelling big balers has come from farmers and custom operators who use the machines to bale up flax straw. You eliminate the need for a tractor, and with a self-propelled rig, the operator doesn't have to look backwards to keep an eye on the machine," Hamman points out.

Also unveiling a self-propelled big baler was Dehondt, a division of Sorepam, N-D De Gravenchon, France. The company — which designed and builds the self-propelled conversion assembly for its Dehondt line of pull-type big balers, has sold about 50 of the conversion kits, all of them to owners who use the balers primarily for baling flax straw.



Driver can easily monitor material flow into converted baler without having to look back.

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