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**Factors of Success for Agricultural Conservation Education Events**

Leslie Everett, Jodi DeJong-Hughes, Jeffrey Vetsch

**Abstract Text:**

A successful format for large conservation education events has evolved, which reversed the trend of declining attendance at extension education programs for farmers and agricultural professionals. General crop management and conservation practice field days at research stations have not drawn large audiences in recent years in Minnesota. As part of a conservation tillage demonstration 319-funded project, field days to provide information on tillage systems and on-farm research were presented in 2004-2005. Attendance ranged from 50 to 125 per event over two years. Based on observations from regional manure management expos originated by the University of Wisconsin, the University of Minnesota (UM) organized and delivered two strip-tillage expos in 2006, which were attended by approximately 300 each. Requests from attendees and exhibitors led to two regional strip-tillage expos delivered in 2007, drawing over 500 each. Farmers traveled from adjacent states, some from several hundred miles, to participate. The Midwest expo was hosted by Iowa State University, the University of Wisconsin, Hawkeye Technical College, and the UM. The Northern expo was organized by North Dakota State University and the UM. We attribute success to the following factors: 1. The events were focused on one topic, strip-tillage, which many farmers have heard about but not seen. 2. Side-by-side field demonstrations of commercially available equipment were carried out by 8-12 manufacturers. This provided both the interest of equipment moving in the field, and a chance to see how the equipment performs. 3. Experienced strip-tillage farmers described their systems and took questions in a panel format as well as individually, providing real-world credibility. 4. Specialists from universities as well as the private sector provided specific and research-based information on crop, soil, and machinery management related to strip-tillage. More information is available at <http://wrc.umn.edu/outreach/stripillageexpo/index.html>

**Impact Statement:**

Adoption of conservation tillage for corn following soybeans in the upper Midwest has been impeded by reduced yields in no-till systems. This project demonstrated on farmer fields high residue systems that maintained economic returns for corn following soybeans. Focused education events successfully delivered that information to a large audience of farmers and ag professionals.