

# Leading Edge

The Journal of No-Till Agriculture

March 2003 • Volume 2 • Number 1

No-till

On The Plains

## Think Twice

by Matt Hagny



“Organized Chaos”—are the words used by Kirk Gadzia to describe ‘stacked’ rotations and the resulting ‘confusion’ of the pests, but this phrase aptly describes Thompson Farms LLC as well. Brothers Keith and Doug Thompson, along with Keith’s son Ben, and the family patriarch Jim, juggle lots of activities both on and off their farm south of Topeka, KS. The result might appear haphazard, but the farm has a fluid structure and solid management that runs deep.

No aspect of their operation is left undisturbed as Thompsons search for greater efficiencies in everything: wringing a few more dollars out of their budget, tinkering towards better seeding equipment, testing crop varieties, or reinventing how they



Photo by Keith Thompson.

For Thompsons, double-cropping after wheat is both an opportunity and a necessity. 2001 double-crop milo here.

write their lease arrangements. The Thompsons search far and wide for improvements, with Keith having made three trips to South America to gather new understanding, with Ben the voracious reader, and with Doug keeping tabs on the latest developments in the seed & herbicide industry through a Dekalb/Asgrow dealership. They take the best of what’s around, add a few ideas of their own, and put them all to the test in dozens of different

experiments conducted each year on Thompson Farms. Yield maps, detailed financial records, and lots of analysis keep them honest with themselves.

The departure from conventional thinking must be genetic—at least that should be your conclusion after getting to know the Thompsons. Jim first tried no-till in nineteen-forty, on hundreds of acres! Far from being a sign of lunacy, it was a calculated decision during an exceptionally wet spring & summer as a last-ditch effort to get the crop planted. Jim notes, “We got a stand,



Photo by Keith Thompson.

Ben checks the root development in a young milo crop. Everything is closely monitored for desired results at Thompson Farms.

## Contents

- Think Twice* .....89
- Ray Ward on Soils* .....94
- Tillage Reincarnated*.....98
- Herbicide Resistance?*.....101
- Survival, Prosperity, & Managing Your Luck* .....104
- For Land’s Sake* .....106