



# Managing Tillage in Continuous Corn

## Overview

Success managing residue in continuous corn depends on using the right equipment throughout the process. It is also important to manage residue in the field. Removing residue needs to be balanced with any potential impact on water and soil quality.

## What you should know

- As farmers move to high-yield continuous corn production, they should evaluate the risks and benefits of changing from typical corn crop rotation.
- Economists say that farmers should expect higher production costs and will need to produce larger yields to make continuous corn profitable.
- Residue management, seed placement, nitrogen (N) application and equipment attachments are challenges in managing continuous corn tillage.
- Continuous corn creates a significant amount of residue buildup, which can change your tillage system and equipment needs.
- Tillage (or no-till management) and a single crop system can have significant soil impacts and risk potential yield decline.
- Farmers should use a system approach to residue management that includes planting integration, nutrient application and harvest practices.

## Action steps

1. **Cut residue after harvest:** To have a manageable residue cover at planting, cut residue height to 12-24 inches after harvest.
2. **Calibrate equipment to control residue:** Calibrating your combine to ensure a uniform residue distribution on the soil surface can take the place of cutting residue after harvest. Fine-tuning your combine can provide uniform residue cover.
3. **Apply N in the fall:** Fall nitrogen application may stimulate residue decomposition in N-deficient soils.

<https://news.ans.purdue.edu/html3month/2006/060214.Lowenberg.contin.html>  
<https://crops.extension.iastate.edu/tillage-challenges-managing-continuous-corn>



*The right equipment is important for managing residue in continuous corn.*



## 30-Second Summary

- Continuous corn presents residue buildup challenges for farmers.
- Cutting residue following harvest or calibrating combines to uniformly distribute residue can help with residue management.
- Fall nitrogen application can help stimulate residue decomposition.

## NOTES:

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