



## Fall Newsletter

October 2007

# GCTA at Sunbelt Ag Expo

For the past four years the Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance has helped sponsor the Team Conservation Tillage exhibit at Expo. Well, your Team needs you. Each year we have had over 1,000 visitors to the exhibit that includes displays on: Getting Started, Soil Quality, Irrigation Efficiency, Capturing Soil Carbon, and Economics. Every year farmers are asking questions about how conservation tillage practices can

be adapted to their farm or about particular problems they might encounter. They want to talk to the experts and in many cases the experts are you!

Come enjoy a day at the Expo October 16, 17, and 18<sup>th</sup> and volunteer a little time to spend at

**See you at the Expo!**

the exhibit talking with fellow farmers. It's a great way to spend the day. To volunteer, please contact Mr. Lamar Black or Dr. Gary Hawkins (Phone 229-392-4078, [ghawkins@uga.edu](mailto:ghawkins@uga.edu)).



## Upcoming Events

**October 16-17-18-** Sunbelt Agricultural Expo, Moultrie, GA See events schedule at [www.sunbeltexpo.com](http://www.sunbeltexpo.com) Contact Lamar or Gary to help out.



**January 10-13, 2008-** Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Grower's Association sponsors the 2008 Southeast Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference, Savannah, GA. <http://www.gfvga.org/>

**February 26-27-**GCTA annual conference will be held in Hawkinsville, GA

**February 29-March 1-** Georgia Organics annual conference will be held in Dalton, GA. [www.georgiaorganics.org](http://www.georgiaorganics.org)

**July 29-31-**Tillage School, Tifton

**NOTE-**The Powerpoint presentation "Mythbusters of Conservation Tillage" is available on the GCTA website: [www.gcta-ga.org](http://www.gcta-ga.org)

Send event notices to  
Joy Schomberg  
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### **Attention GCTA Members**

Planning has begun for the 2008 Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance Annual Meeting. GCTA is **your** alliance and your questions and concerns could help to shape the program for the 2008 meeting. If you have topics you would like to see addressed at the annual meeting, please contact Gary Hawkins, phone 229-392-4078 or email [ghawkins@uga.edu](mailto:ghawkins@uga.edu) or contact your local GCTA Board Member.

Topics currently being considered are: Controlling resistant pigweed, the new farm program, and ethanol production.

### **RESEARCH UPDATE:**

## **Multi-State Project to Sustain Peanut and Cotton Yields by Incorporating Cattle into a Sod Based Rotation**

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Over the past few years researchers from Alabama, Florida and Georgia have been working to understand and improve an old approach to farming: integrating cattle (or hay) and crop (peanut or cotton) production into an economically successful operation. Improving profitability is the main goal of the research but improving soil quality, water use efficiency, and reducing chemical inputs are also key outcomes of the research. The primary focus lies in using Bahia or Bermuda grass (roots) to reduce soil compaction. The extensive root network adds organic matter to the soil and establishes "channels" that can help peanut and cotton plants obtain more water and nutrients. The added organic matter helps improve infertile soils for better nutrient and water holding capacity. Nematode problems are also reduced because the grasses do not serve as hosts to cotton and peanut nematode pests thus helping to reduce pesticide costs. Researchers are evaluating a four-year cycle that includes two years of bahiagrass followed by a year of peanuts and a year of cotton. Each phase of the system is present each year



so that cotton and peanuts are produced each year. The research got underway in 2006 at

Tifton and Quincy where crop production will be compared to standard peanut/cotton rotations. Grazing began on second-year bahiagrass at sites in Marianna and Headland, FL in 2007. Drs. David Wright and Jim Marois, at the University of Florida, North Florida

Research and Education Center in Quincy, FL have developed a computer spreadsheet program to help farmers determine whether sod-based rotation could work for them. The spreadsheet can be accessed at <http://nfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/sodrotation.htm#econ> By entering data on acreage, yield, expenses and other variables, users can develop profit estimates. Ultimately, this type of rotation could be adapted to work in other parts of the country, using appropriate local crops and grasses.

For more information check out the web page above or contact Dr. [David L. Wright](mailto:dlw@mail.ifas.ufl.edu), Extension Agronomist, University of Florida Email: [dlw@mail.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:dlw@mail.ifas.ufl.edu)

# Time to Test Soils for Spring Nutrient Needs

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**Georgia  
Conservation  
Tillage  
Alliance**

Fall is a good time to consider fertilizer needs for the next year's crop and that means evaluating the soil nutrient status. Drought conditions experienced during the past year in many parts of the state most likely left more nutrients in the soil than usual. This increases the need for soil testing so that fertility is managed economically. Fall is a good time to take samples, but for good comparisons it is important to sample at approximately the same time each year.

To obtain the best results, collect samples from similar areas (soil type, drainage, crop growth and slope characteristics). This will allow you to manage each area properly and know how to correct problem areas. When collecting samples avoid areas where fertilizer or lime was stockpiled or where old structures were located. In each sampling area take 10 to 20 cores in a zigzag pattern and place them in a clean plastic container. For cultivated fields collect samples to 6 inches or to plow depth. Pastures should be sampled to a 4-inch depth. Conservation tillage fields should be sampled by collecting a shallow core from about 0-2 inches putting it in one container, then going back in the same hole to obtain a 2-6 inch sample and placing it in a separate container. Mix the cores in the container thoroughly and remove about a pint of the well-mixed soil to submit to the laboratory. Label each sample so you know which field and area of field it represents. Soil sample bags can be obtained from your county agent.

Liming to maintain proper soil pH is one way to get the most from applied fertilizers and nutrients already in the soil. High soil pH reduces availability of nutrients like manganese and zinc while a low pH can decrease yields due to aluminum toxicity. Managing soil pH in conservation tillage systems is different due to the lack of soil mixing and application of nutrients to the soil surface. The use of a shallow core and then the deeper core as described above will allow you to detect a pH change while it is easy to correct.

Another tool that can be helpful in managing nutrient inputs is a nutrient budget, particularly if you are using animal manures such as poultry litter. A nutrient budget determines the amount of nutrients you are adding with the animal manure, and subtracts them from the recommended fertilizer rates. This approach can prevent overapplication of nutrients and decrease your fertilizer costs. Information on developing a nutrient budget can be found at [www.agp2.org](http://www.agp2.org) under Animal Waste Management. The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Georgia Department of Agriculture and Certified Crop Advisors, or other private consultants, can assist you in developing parts of a comprehensive nutrient management plan.

This information should get you well on your way. Remember, a little effort this fall will produce better yields next summer.

*For more information on this article, contact:*  
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## Conservation Tillage Alliances

Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance  
Coffee County Conservation Tillage Alliance, Inc.  
East Central Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance  
Mid State Conservation Tillage Alliance  
Southeast Georgia Conservation Tillage Alliance  
Upper Suwannee Conservation Tillage Alliance  
Worth County Conservation Tillage Alliance

## GCTA Board Members

Lamar Black, Millen  
Ronnie Barentine, Hawkinsville  
Jimmy Dean, Athens  
Jim Donaldson, Metter  
Glen Harris, Tifton  
Bob Rawlins, Rebecca  
Don Register, Chula  
Steve Spooner, Sylvester  
Robert Thompson, Kathleen

### *Why Conservation Tillage?*

#### **Conservation Tillage is beneficial because it...**

- Saves soil
- Saves fuel
- Saves time
- Saves labor
- Saves machinery
- Permits timely planting
- Maintains or slightly increases yield
- Is cost-effective
- Increases soil organic matter
- Improves soil quality
- Improves water quality
- Reduces runoff
- Increases soil moisture
- Increases irrigation efficiency
- Improves wildlife habitat
- Meets Farm Bill Requirements
- Helps insure the quality of life for our children and our children's children

*See more information on conservation tillage and GCTA  
at*

[www.gcta-ga.org](http://www.gcta-ga.org)



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