

## NewsWatch

# Strip till, new tech aid beets

By RUSTY TEWS

**C**ONTINUED cold and wet weather, \$4 fuel, and high fertilizer costs will make 2008 a year southern Idaho sugarbeet producers will long remember. Growers abandoned at least 17,000 acres of the 140,000 acres planted for Amalgamated Sugar Co. due to harsh spring weather.

Shaw Land and Livestock of Dietrich, Idaho, contracted for 390 of those acres. "We ended up harvesting 125 acres of strip-tilled beets planted into shredded cornstalks," says Acey Shaw, farm manager. "We lost another pivot of beets strip-tilled into wheat stubble because, I think, there wasn't enough residue left to protect the seedlings from wind and frost." Shaw lost the farm's conventionally planted beets.

Besides strip till, Shaw and his brother, Andy, used Roundup Ready seed. "We've had beets blown out every year on our sandy soils," Acey Shaw says. "We've heard about Roundup Ready beets and strip till for a couple of years and needed to do something different."

Typically, Shaw uses as many as 14 passes to produce beets. "We rip, disk, bed, plant, spray, cultivate and hand weed," says Shaw. "This year we strip tilled, planted, sprayed twice and cultivated."

Custom rates for cultivation can be as high as \$30 per pass. Shaw figures he saved \$8,000 on the 125 strip-tilled acres. Production costs included a

## Key Points

- Cold, wet weather reduced Idaho beet production.
- Farmers report good results using Roundup Ready crops.
- Strip tillage also works well for Idaho producers.

\$50-per-acre "tech fee" for use of Roundup Ready beets, but Shaw saved an \$80-per-acre hand-weeding cost incurred in 2007.

"We only cultivated so the topper had a row to follow," Shaw says.

## Reasons for success

Shaw cites several factors for the success in strip till and Roundup Ready in corn and beets. "Last year's cornstalks help protect seedlings with a microclimate," says Shaw. "If you can keep them [seedlings] from stressing from wind, when it frosts, they are a little stronger and survive."

Strip till disturbs an area 10 inches wide between cornstalks. "All the water and fertilizer from irrigation," he says, "runs down right under the seedling."

Data from University of Minnesota research shows an advantage for water infiltration in strip-tilled crops over conventional cropping.

A big bonus for Shaw is early-spring soil moisture in his sandy soils. "Usually, we disk and the soil would dry out, and we would have to water it," he says. "Now we plant into moisture; that's a pretty good savings there."

Perhaps for Shaw the ben-



**TIME-SAVER:** Acey Shaw, Dietrich, Idaho, is planning to plant directly into the cornstalks to protect his 2009 beets from frost and wind. He feels strip till will save him 10 trips over this field in 2009.

efits are greatest for his family. "We used to live with the beets until July 4," he says. "With less

time in the fields, I can watch my kids play ball in the spring-time. Before, I was always in the

tractor."

*Tews writes from Shoshone, Idaho.*

## South China logistics center offers market for Western ag products

By T.J. BURNHAM

**A** NEW logistics center in Zhuhai, China, developed through efforts of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, offers an unprecedented marketplace for farm products from Western states.

"There are already people in China talking with us about opening similar facilities in other areas of that nation," says Katy Coba, ODA director.

But Coba says many details remain to be worked out for product testing and other operations at the Zhuhai center before she would want to

expand on the concept. "Before we replicate this new way to market our farm products, we have to make sure things are working well at this first effort," she says.

Coba and other Western farm leaders were on hand to open the center this summer. While Oregon has taken the lead in cooperation with Chinese officials to establish the facility, "we invited other states to participate due to the largeness of the center," Coba explains.

One big plus for Oregon's success setting up the center for food imports and exports in southern China is the inclusion

of the Zhuhai Peace Logistics Co. in the deal to test food products.

Already, ODA testing is accepted as the certification for farm products traded to Asian nations such as Japan, and the Peace Logistics Co. project brings the first hint that a cooperative program could be established for farm sales to China.

"We have been talking with China about such an agreement for a long time, but without much interest on their part," says Coba. "Now, it seems that we're making important progress in that direction."

The new logistics center, in

## They said it

"My growers are saying it [Roundup Ready beet seed] is so much easier [and] that it was worth it. They'll never go back."



**Greg Cameron,**  
farmer and Holly Hybrid  
seed representative,  
Rupert, Idaho

"I abandoned two fields and planted into triticale. One field worked really well. I planted the 20th of May into standing triticale. The other field I chopped and planted, and it didn't do so well. The good field had 28 tons to the acre with the best sugar I had."

**Chris Taber,**  
beet producer,  
Shoshone, Idaho

