

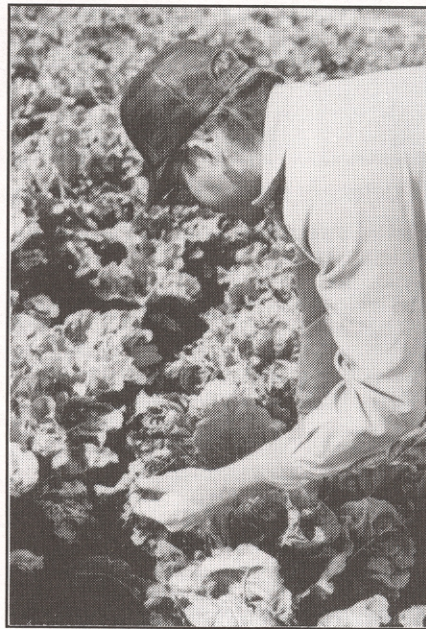
Beating the odds: Strip-tilling helps control wind erosion

— By Alan Girard for the Alternative Energy Resources Organization in Helena, Mont. —

Sugar beet farmers working on highly erodible land have always been in search of new ways to keep from losing their soil to the wind. They've heard about the success no-till grain farmers have had with stubble during the off-season, but have been unsure how to combine no-till with the corrugation and bedding techniques normally used to grow sugar beets.

Bill Iversen, a beet grower from arid Sidney in extreme northeastern Montana, is cautiously optimistic about "strip-tilling," the term he coined to describe a no-till technique on his land. Strip-tilling has had its share of problems, but has given Iversen valuable new tools for controlling the impact of wind erosion.

The method involves alternating



Bill Iversen checks the root system of his beet crop.

beets with grain, treating grain as a row crop. Beds are formed when the grain is planted so that the grain can

be irrigated without the use of border dikes. At harvest, the grain is cut just above the ground, leaving a layer of stubble, the same as in no-till grain farming. One seven-inch-wide band is then tilled on the center of each bed; these bands are 24 inches apart. The beets will then be planted in the tilled strips with a conventional planter. The corrugations remain between the beds to aid in tractor guidance and furrow irrigation.

The stubble cuts wind and water erosion and replenishes the crucial organic content of the topsoil as residue slowly decomposes. Moreover, Iversen's method cuts the expense of plowing, mulching and leveling the land just prior to planting the beets in the spring.

Iversen was attracted to no-till because about two thirds of his farm is

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Bug your Russian wheat aphids to death

— By David Granatstein, coordinator of the Washington State University Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources in Wenatchee —

A number of aphids are permanent residents of the dryland cereal regions of the northwestern states, and several of these periodically cause significant damage to grain crops. Among them are the English grain aphid and the bird cherry-oat aphid.

Weather conditions are a major

determinant of damage by these insects. Since distribution and damage is often irregular, few grain growers have a consistent control program for these pests.

Yield losses in wheat from aphids can result from direct feeding, introduction of toxins, and the transmission of plant viruses such as barley yellow dwarf virus. In field settings, two or more of the aphid pest species normally can be found.

Keith Pike, an entomologist at the *MORE APHIDS, PAGE 4*