

**Zone-tillage on the Cecarelli Farm,
Northford, CT**
Vegetable Growers' Twilight Meeting
Sponsored by the UConn Cooperative Extension System & NE SARE
June 5, 2008 6:00-8:00 PM
Pizza and beverages will be provided free.

Nelson Cecarelli grows approximately 100 acres of sweet corn, squash, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, lettuce, peas, beans and cabbage. He experienced severe erosion problems with all the rain in 2006, and in 2007, transitioned to a form of reduced tillage called deep zone tillage on his corn and winter squash. This system combines strip tillage with zone building/subsoiling. It produces a slightly-raised, narrow seedbed (5-8" wide), that warms faster than conventional or no-till fields, but still protects the soil between rows with a surface residue. When combined with the use of winter cover crops, deep zone tillage helps replace organic matter lost through years of conventional tillage, reverses the deterioration of the soil, improves soil structure and drainage, increases soil water and nutrient holding capacity, and allows beneficial soil organisms, such as earthworms, to thrive.

Nelson made fewer trips across his fields using deep zone-tillage, **saved on fuel**, reduced dust and noise when preparing fields near a crowded neighborhood, and had his best yields ever, despite a prolonged drought. He also preserved soil moisture which allowed his sequential corn plantings to be planted and to emerge on time, despite the dry weather. He had better plant stands than in his bare-ground fields, prevented dry tips on his sweet corn (without irrigation), had his cleanest winter squash and pumpkins ever, and acquired new rental land from a nearby municipality that will no longer rent to farmers that use conventional tillage. Of course, he also reduced the risk of water and wind erosion, started to brake up the plow pan, which in turn, reduces the risk of soil flooding and disease problems (i.e. Phytophthra), and took the first step back to a healthy soil.

Come hear Nelson and others describe their experiences using deep zone tillage and see this system in action. Eben Weil an equipment dealer, from S. C. Hansen, Inc. in Horseheads, NY, will be there to describe the hardware needed to make this transition. Hope to see you there.

Jude Boucher

UConn Cooperative Extension.

Directions:

From the North: Go south on I-91 to Wallingford and take the E. Center Street Exit (for Rt. 150). At the top of the ramp, take a left onto E. Center St. and cross back over the highway. Go 0.6 miles and turn right onto Northford Rd. Go 2.2 miles to the stop sign at Rt 17. Go right on Rt. 17 for 0.2 miles and take your first right onto Old Post Rd. The farm is ½ mile up on the right.

From the South: Go north on I-91 to Exit 8 (Rt 80 Exit). Take a left onto Rt. 17 (north) and proceed several miles to Northford town center (intersection of Rt. 22 and 17). Take a left at the second traffic light in the town center onto Rt. 22 and **immediately** (about 30 feet) take a right onto Old Post Road. The Cecarelli Farm is located on Old Post Road (bare right when the road forks), 0.8 miles north of the Northford town center.