

Sustainability of Modern Farming in the US: *The Importance of Herbicides*



The Choice for Weed Control

9-10 Tillage Trips

or

2-3 Herbicide Applications

Weeds are a constant presence on the nation's farms; uncontrolled they can lead to serious reductions in crop yields. Before the advent of herbicides, tilling fields upwards of nine to 10 times per year was the primary method used by farmers to remove weeds threatening crops, especially as westward expansion in the 19th century dramatically increased the nation's acreage.

Tilling fields so often created dire erosion problems on the nation's farmlands. By 1938, half the topsoil on 100 million acres had been lost, indicating the less than sustainable farming path the nation was headed down and directly contributing to the infamous Dust Bowl storms.

In a new, extensively researched presentation, Leonard Gianessi, Director of the Crop Protection Research Institute, traces the history of weed control in America and contrasts the historical use of tillage with the modern use of herbicides. American farmers, by substituting two or three herbicide applications for nine or 10 tillage trips, have reduced erosion, saved significantly on energy use, and conserved water – all important steps in resource conservation for a sustainable future in U.S. farming. Leonard explains the enormous contribution that herbicides have made to increasing crop yields through better weed control and by facilitating the adoption of other yield-enhancing practices. Finally, Leonard explains the consequences organic farms face by not utilizing herbicides.

To schedule this 40-minute presentation, contact: awilliams@croplifefoundation.org or at 202-872-3848.