

# Minimum Till Still an Option

at faster speeds. “The shanks have a chisel point with a 4-inch twist. So between the front discs, which help size the material, the shovels and the rear disc gang, material gets chopped and buried pretty well.”

Bob and Kenny Felleron have also found a 4511 disc chisel to be a valuable asset. “We’re seeing a lot more trash out there than we used to,” Kenny admits, noting that a lot of their corn consists of Roundup Ready triple-stacked varieties.

Like the Granneses, the Fellerons, who also operate in southwest Minnesota, start by chopping stalks shortly after harvest. However, they use a pull-type stalk chopper—followed by the disc chisel at approximately 6 miles per hour a few days later.

“It leaves a nice mix,” Kenny says. “When you look down from the tractor cab, you can see about 60 to 65% black dirt. Once the buried residue deteriorates over the winter and we hit it with the field cultivator and a crumbler attachment in the spring, it leaves an ideal seedbed.”

Sunflower’s Kuster, though, suggests that attention be given to how deep the debris is buried. “The microbes that break down residue are always most aggressive right below the soil surface where there’s a good mix of soil, air and moisture,” he explains. “Unfortunately, they go dormant when the soil temperature drops to 40°F, which means the farther north you go, the quicker the window closes.”

Lucky for producers, the Sunflower tiller system allows them to get the job done quickly, just before the cold window of winter slams shut. ■

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**For terrific service and equipment, both the Granneses and Fellerons use Weltsch Equipment, Inc., in Redwood Falls, Minn., while the Thompsons work with Lynott Implement, Inc., Hawarden, Iowa, and Butler Machinery Co., in Souix Falls, S.D.**

**THE INCREASED NEED for residue management doesn’t mean farmers can’t still enjoy some form of minimum-till farming. According to Sunflower’s Larry Kuster, “A number of producers have also adopted the new Sunflower 7600 Series strip-till machine to build a planter-ready seedbed in residue-covered fields. By tilling a narrow strip for each row, while leaving the rest of the field untouched, producers have the best possible compromise between no-till and conventional tillage. However, I think it’s still to their advantage to use a tandem disc or other primary tillage tool every 2 to 3 years to deal with the residue that builds up over time.”**

**That’s certainly been the course of action for Dave Utecht, who farms near Hastings, Neb., and whose dealer is Fairbanks International. Until recently, Utecht was using a Sunflower Model 4511 disc chisel every fall to size and bury corn residue. In his quest to adopt a ridge-till program, however, Utecht has started using the 4511 on a rotational basis as needed to control residue build-up.**

**“It kind of depends on the field and conditions,” he says. “I grow a lot of corn-on-corn, which can cause the trash to accumulate rather quickly. However, with the ridge-till system, I can generally skip a year with the disc chisel unless it’s been a really wet year, like it was last year.”**

**“I really don’t have a set plan anymore,” he admits, noting that he averages around 230 to 250 bushels per acre from plant populations that range from 31,000 to 34,000 plants per acre. “It just depends on the year and the crop,” he concludes. “Some of these *Bt* corn hybrids can be pretty tough.”**