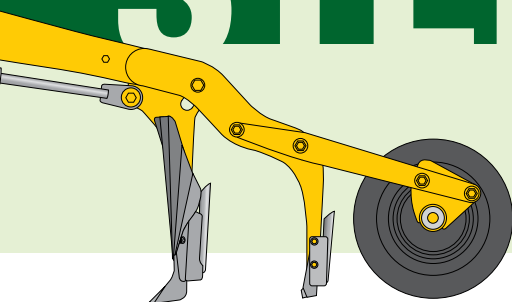


# STEERING YOU STRAIGHT



Your Precision Seeding Newsletter

FROM THE PRESIDENT

## NEW SEED MASTER RESEARCH FARM

### Advancing the Science of Zero Till

When I first came up with the Seed Master™ design in the early 90s, my goal was the same as it is today – to improve the efficiency of no-till farming.

We've come a long way since then. Our low-maintenance Seed Master openers provide 100% accurate seed and fertilizer placement. The Smart Hitch and Residue Deflector make it easy for farmers to seed into tall stubble of any height. And the 80-foot Seed Master delivers across-the-board savings in equipment, fuel and labour costs.

Now Straw Track Manufacturing is about to raise the bar – and push crop yields – even higher.

### 14-inch Row Spacing and 3-Foot Stubble

We are converting our 1,400-acre family farm near Langbank, SK, into a full farm-scale research site. This spring, we will lay out our fields on 14-inch row spacing and harvest our crops with a stripper header, leaving stubble more than three feet tall to seed back into with the Smart Hitch.

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Norbert Beaujot, President of Straw Track Manufacturing, says this 3-foot, stripper header, wheat stubble is a good example of what the Seed Master will seed into at the Langbank Research Farm.

## 80-FOOT SEED MASTER IN HIGH DEMAND

The ongoing need to reduce costs and increase efficiency is prompting farmers across the prairies to trade in smaller seed drills for the new 80-foot Seed Master – the largest one-pass air seeder in North America.

Just months after it was unveiled at the Farm Progress Show, the 80-foot unit “is quickly becoming our Number 1 selling seed drill,” says Straw Track Manufacturing President Norbert Beaujot, P.Eng.



The 80-foot Seed Master offers “bang on” seed placement and big savings on fuel, labour and equipment costs.

“Sales have climbed beyond expectations,” says Beaujot. “The 80-foot Seed Master answers a growing demand for larger drills as farms get bigger and bigger at a faster rate.”

### Bigger is Better

Richard Dimler and his sons crop 12,000 acres at Double Bar D Farms near Grenfell, SK. Dimler says larger equipment and less of it is important for farm survival. “We have no control over market prices. We can only control production costs. If we can run larger equipment for the same number of hours, and save on labour and fuel, we will.”

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Dimler and his sons traded in a smaller disk drill for the 80-footer. Now they're wondering whether to sell a 64-foot seeder and run the Seed Master with two operators on a double shift for even greater savings. "But we might expand our land base, so we'll have to wait and see."

Ed Roeher, who farms near Hodgeville, SK, replaced a 59-foot drill with the 80-footer. "We need to speed up our planting season" for faster emergence, an earlier harvest, and less chance of frost damage, he says.

## "Bang On" Seed Placement

Roeher looks forward to a more uniform planting depth with the Seed Master. "We weren't satisfied with seed placement on our old drill," he says, pointing out seed depth must be 'bang on' for uniform emergence and ripening.

The Seed Master – with its terrain-following, hydraulically-controlled shanks – ensures seed depth never wavers regardless of bumps or knolls. "We noticed right off the bat the fields ripened uniformly," says Alfred Bechard.

## Saved \$10,000 on Fuel

Bechard asked Straw Track to build the first 80-foot Seed Master for Be-ver Farms near Sedley, SK, last winter. The 80-footer seeded 10,000 acres in 17 days

with no down time - replacing two smaller drills and requiring one less tractor and driver. Bechard estimates the fuel savings alone totalled \$10,000. "And we harvested the best crops across the board in years" thanks to the Seed Master, he adds.



Farmers gathered in Sedley, SK, this fall to learn more about the cost efficiencies they gain by seeding crops with an 80-foot Seed Master – the largest one-pass drill in North America.

# U.S. Farmer Lobbies for Seed Master

## A Seed Master owner near Mohall, N.D., says he's being discriminated against for using a hoe drill.

Dave Witteman says a conservation tillage incentive program in the U.S. penalizes farmers who use hoe openers because they disturb more soil than a disk drill. "You would have to use a disk drill to get full funding."

Witteman argues his Seed Master knife openers work better than a disk drill in northern climates where spring soil temperatures are much colder than regions to the south.

## Faster Emergence in Cold Soil

"My Seed Master leaves a thin, black strip of soil that warms the seed bed faster for quick emergence," he explains. "You don't get that with a disk drill. If there's an early fall frost, those extra days of emergence can be critical."

Witteman's Seed Master also features a Smart Hitch – a hydraulic hitch attachment that keeps the openers centred between the stubble rows. "It leaves all the stubble standing, protecting against moisture loss and wind damage. But with all that, it still doesn't qualify for full funding."

Witteman says his Seed Master is eligible for only 75% of funding under the Environment Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – \$2,400 short of full coverage. EQIP switched to a new ratings system called



Dave Witteman says his Seed Master knives work better than disk drills in northern climates.

the Soil Tillage Intensity Rating (STIR) this year that measures the percentage of soil disturbance to determine subsidies.

Witteman is lobbying the U.S. government to treat disk drills and his knife openers equally. He's been writing letters, making phone calls, and speaking to farmers.

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) stands behind EQIP and the STIR factor. An NRCS spokesperson says Seed Master knife openers do qualify as conservation tillage but because they disturb more soil than disk openers, they receive less funding.

## More Consistent Stands

Brian Michels, a technical service provider for the NRCS and a Mohall-based crop consultant with Production Service Agronomy, agrees with Witteman. Knife openers do "warm the soil faster especially in cool, wet conditions." And disk drills can't always cut through heavy, wet trash, he adds. Stands are "more consistent with shank drills around here."

Thirteen miles north, the Canadian government treats knife openers and disk drills equally under its National Farm Stewardship Program. Farmers who qualify can receive up to \$15,000 to purchase conservation tillage openers – including Seed Master's.

"Most Canadian farmers who practise conservation tillage use knife openers because they work more consistently across different soil conditions and produce a great crop," says Blair McClinton, executive manager of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association.

Witteman is determined not to give up. He worries STIR will become a standard for measuring conservation tillage under future government farm programs. Rather than discriminate, he wants the government to let farmers choose the best equipment and practices to suit their situation.

## North versus South Issue

"This is a North versus South issue," says Witteman. "It doesn't make sense for a national program to determine the best farming practices for an entire country. The climate varies across North Dakota let alone the whole nation."

# Shallow, Uniform Seeding Boosts Yields During Drought

Despite July's drought conditions and searing heat, some prairie farmers say shallow, uniform seeding gave them "a definite edge" this summer that resulted in higher yields than others around them. It's not surprising, say researchers, when you look at the science behind it.

"I believe we did better yield-wise than the average for our area" because shallow, uniform seeding gave us fast and even emergence, says Gero Wendorff, who crops 1,800 acres with a Seed Master near St. Michael, AB. "With faster emergence, my crops took full advantage of spring moisture rather than the seeds sitting in deeper ground for several days doing nothing." His canola averaged 40 bu/acre while his barley ran 80-90 bu/acre.

## "Extra bushels"

"The evenness of our stand from one end of the field to the other, up and down hills, gave us extra bushels. Absolutely. The maximum amount of seeds emerged with this drill," says Del Gates, a certified seed grower and Seed Master owner near Mohall, N.D. His last measurable rainfall was June 6. "After that, we had nothing until August."

Ample spring moisture saved many farmers from disastrous yields this fall, but Gates, Wendorff and Todd Sprecken say shallow, uniform seed placement at ¾ inches gave them an extra boost above the rest.

"My crops jumped out of the ground faster, they canopied better and the yields were higher," says Sprecken,

a Seed Master owner who crops 3,000 acres of wheat, durum, canola, flax and yellow peas near Griffin, SK.

## Researchers Agree

Yantai Gan, a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Swift Current, SK, agrees shallow, uniform seeding can add extra bushels during a drought year.



Del Gates says shallow, uniform seeding gave him extra bushels despite drought conditions.

"Shallow and uniform seeds take less effort to emerge and have more energy to develop a stronger rooting system. So when drought conditions hit later in the season, there are lots of lateral branch roots to absorb water and minimize damage caused by drought compared to deeper seeded plants. That leads to higher yields." He adds crops seeded uniformly emerge evenly, developing better canopies that lead to higher seed production.

Placing seeds shallow and uniform also speeds plant development due to faster emergence. That can be crucial for crops like canola which are subject to heat blasting on the flowers, stresses Ross McKenzie, an agronomy research scientist with Alberta Agriculture. "With grain or oilseeds, if you can get the crop moving from the vegetative to reproductive stage before the heat hits, you'll have higher potential yields. So seed early and shallow."

And the deeper you seed, the lower your plant numbers will be because weaker seeds have less energy to push through soil, says Gan. He compared canola, flax and mustard seeded at ¾ inches versus two inches in early May of 2000 to 2002 at Swift Current, SK. The shallow seeds emerged 3 to 5 days faster with yields up to 25% higher. The yield increase was smaller but still noticeable with larger seeds like peas.

## Seed Master Crop "One of the Best"

Sprecken says his fields turned heads this summer. "One neighbor joked that three years ago, I was one of the worst farmers in the RM. He said in the last two years I've produced one of the best crops. 'What's your secret,' he asked. 'Is it your Seed Master or have you got a horse shoe somewhere?'"

"The Seed Master really does make a difference," says Sprecken. "Its seed and fertilizer placement is right on the money."

# New Seed Master Website "User Friendly"

## Dealers Recommend Site to Customers

The new Seed Master website is making life easier for equipment dealers and farmers wanting to price out new seed drills.

"It's so user friendly and informative. It walks you through the pricing step by step," says Curtis Hinrichsen, New Equipment Manager, with Farm World Equipment Ltd.

Hinrichsen has been recommending the website to customers, who can now custom build and price a Seed Master on their home computer in minutes. So when customers visit his dealership to finalize the sale, they know exactly what they want and what it will cost.

## Manufacturer Discounts Online

The website shows farmers the "rock bottom price" for a Seed Master if they take advantage of numerous manufacturer discounts - such as choosing early pro-

duction and delivery dates, says Hinrichsen. "Most of our customers use the Internet regularly to do research. They'll think this is great."

Tom Moody, Branch Manager of Moody's Equipment Ltd. in Lloydminster, SK, says the website is a welcome relief to dealers who normally have to wade through pages of tiny numbers and do a lot of calculations to price out equipment.

"As long as you know what features the customer wants, you can't mess up," says Moody. The Seed Master website asks which options and features the farmer prefers, including drill width and seed and fertilizer capacity. It then computes the price immediately - no calculators and no headaches.

"I wish my mainline company would offer something like this," says Hinrichsen.

**Go to [www.seedmaster.ca](http://www.seedmaster.ca), click on "Online Pricing" and see for yourself how simple it is to price out a Seed Master.**



Tom Moody says it's fast and easy to price out a new Seed Master on your computer screen at [www.seedmaster.ca](http://www.seedmaster.ca).

Once again, we are charting new territory. We are confident the efficiencies of 14-inch spacing and stripper header harvesting combined with higher yields in three-foot stubble will be tremendous. Some farmers report up to 50% fuel savings with stripper headers. Minimal straw passes through the combine, so fuel and power needs drop while the speed of harvest increases.

### Taller Stubble – Higher Yields

We've already proven the success of 12-inch spacing and seeding between stubble rows up to 22 inches high on our Langbank farm. Yields have jumped by 30% in wheat, flax, canola and peas over the last 10 years as we've cut our stubble higher and used improved crop varieties and practices.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research in Swift Current, SK, found the taller the stubble (up to 18 inches), the higher the yields (up to 17% higher for canola, pulses and wheat) due to the wind shelter, moisture conservation and microclimate effect.

We've seen row spacing studies across Western Canada that show comparable yields on 14-to-16-inch row spacing compared to 6-to-12 inches on spring and winter wheat, barley, canola and lentils. So we don't anticipate problems with 14-inch spacing.

### Wider Row Savings

Wider rows mean fewer openers and lower fuel and power requirements. At 14 inches we can multiply those



Straw Track will build a "simpler" 74-foot Seed Master – with two ranks of openers on 14-inch spacing – cutting equipment, fuel and HP costs by tens of thousands of dollars.

savings by building a simpler drill with only two ranks of openers instead of the usual three. The first rank will be spaced 28 inches apart with the second row staggered over by 14 inches, providing ample residue clearance without adding a third rank.

Eliminating that third rank and reducing the overall number of openers cuts the drill cost by 14%, lowers fuel and HP requirements by 16%, and saves tens of thousands of dollars. It also shaves four feet off the machine length for better cornering and terrain-following features.

With wider rows, we can leave two years of stubble rows standing by using the Smart Hitch. We will move the seed bed over one third of the 14-inch spacing each year and seed between the old stubble rows. By the third year, we will be seeding into three-year-old stubble that has disintegrated, so we'll basically be planting into new soil for a superior seed bed.

Of course, we'll rely on the Smart Hitch to keep our openers between the stubble rows. We'll be testing a new version of the Smart Hitch (patents pending) linking the technology with an auto steer system for greater ease and accuracy.

### Lower Production Costs

Our research plans have caught the attention of respected research scientists. A couple have offered to collaborate and consult with us over the next three years. Guy Lafond, a research scientist with AAFC in Indian Head, SK, feels we're "doing the right thing" by trying to capture all of the efficiencies of no-till farming with fewer openers, less draft and fuel requirements, less soil disturbance and better water conservation. The end result should be a much lower cost of production and higher yields.

We just want to keep farmers like you on the cutting edge of dry land agriculture. If you're in the Langbank area, drop by. We'd love to show you what we're doing.

Best Wishes,

**Norbert Beaujot, P.Eng.**  
*President, Straw Track Manufacturing Inc.*

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