

Canola can be "shallow seeded" at any depth

West-central Saskatchewan farmer Willis Bossaer used to think there were only two options for seeding canola under dry conditions: switch to a different crop or seed canola and pray for rain.

Then the North Battleford, Sask.-area farmer found a third option. He began using a seed drill opener that placed seed to moisture - fairly deep if need be - but still only pack a narrow band of soil on top of the seed. Bossaer was a bit skeptical when he installed the Technotill openers on his air seeder in 1998, but "once we started using them, I could see what a good job it was doing and we never looked back. It produces very consistent results."

Bossaer crops about 1,100 acres of wheat, barley, canola and peas on lighter sandy loam. Before the Technotill, he was using an air tank with a deep tillage cultivator and 16 inch sweeps on 12 inch spacing. "It was a system that loosened the soil quite a bit and if you didn't have good moisture, the soil would dry out," he says.

Midway through the very dry 1998 seeding season, Bossaer almost stopped seeding canola because he had to run the sweeps so deep to place seed into moisture. Then came Technotill. "It was really the best of both worlds," he says. "It allowed me to seed to moisture, but the end result is still a shallow seeded crop. And the Technotill openers were cheaper than adding packer wheels to the cultivator."

Central Alberta farmer Walter Schoenhofer and his wife Betty developed the Technotill seeding system in 1996, after about 15 years of on-farm research and development. Walter died in 2004, but Betty and son and daughter-in-law Colin and Sandi continue to manufacture and market the opener.

The Technotill system features a narrow, low disturbance opener that is followed on the same shank by a skid plate packer. Technotill has its own three-quarter inch wide, carbide tip opener, although the system can also be outfitted with one inch wide Atom Jet openers. The opener places seed, while the skid plate follows and packs either one-quarter or three-eighths of an inch of soil on top of the seed. A fertilizer tube, attached near the back of the skid plate, places fertilizer just above and 1.25 inches to the side of the seed row. The skid plate can be customized to handle granular or liquid fertilizer, or anhydrous ammonia.

"I've had to seed canola 2 to 2.5 inches deep to reach a good moist seedbed," says Bossaer. "But with this system, there is only a quarter inch of soil packed on top of the seed. The seed is placed at the bottom of this little furrow, and some loose soil falls in behind the opener, but that doesn't seem to affect germination. In fact, that loose soil probably helps protect seedbed moisture. This is a good one-pass seeding system that doesn't cause a lot of soil disturbance and helps conserve moisture."

Depending on crop requirements, Bossaer will place up to 185 pounds of nitrogen, phosphorous, sulphur and sometimes potash just to the side and above the seed. "Some people have questioned whether this is a good placement but over a wide range of growing conditions over the past eight years, yields have been consistently good and there has been no seedling damage."

Cost of Technotill openers ranges from \$300 to \$380 per shank depending on the option package. Just two bolts are needed to attach the carbide tipped knock-on openers to the front of the shank and the skid plate packer to the rear of the shank.

"And the system has been trouble free," says Bossaer. "This sandy soil is very abrasive and quickly wears out a sweep. But the carbide tip on the Technotill opener is very wear resistant. It's a low maintenance system which again helps save time, money and labour."

For more information on the Technotill seeding system phone

780 352-9890

or visit the company website at:

www.technotill.com

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