Gearing Up For

NARROW-ROW SOYBEANS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS • COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION SERVICE IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
Want to harvest more beans per acre?

Then grow more rows per acre

Research by the Illinois College of Agriculture shows that soybeans grown in narrow rows (21 to 28 inches) average 15 percent more in yield than soybeans grown in 40-inch rows.

While planting in narrow rows is the surest way to increase your present soybean yields, it is not the easiest way! It will take some planning and machinery adjustments on your part.

On the following pages you will see how some farmers have already geared up for narrow-row soybeans.

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Narrow row spacings can be obtained with a grain drill simply by plugging up certain flutes. Here three rows 28 inches apart are being planted. Larger grain drills can plant six or more rows each trip across the field. Packer wheels behind are not necessary, but will aid germination.
Adapted Corn Planter

After planting narrow rows with a grain drill for many years, Paul Klein of Champaign county adapted his new corn planter for narrow rows. He plants his corn acreage first at 40-inch spacings, then moves the planter units into 28-inch spacings and plants soybeans. To speed up planting, he has added a seed bin that holds 12 extra bushels and is at a convenient height for filling directly from his truck.

Beet or Bean Planter

Planters of this type are available from implement manufacturers. The row spacings may be adapted to fit tractor and cultivator equipment. Joe Hill, a Sangamon county farmer, has used this planter set for 22-inch rows for over 10 years.
HOW TO CULTIVATE

Regardless of row spacing, weed control is a *must* in successful soybean production. The rotary hoe is excellent for early weed control in narrow rows as well as in 40-inch rows.

Because of the time and effort necessary to change spacing, most Illinois growers of narrow-row soybeans do not use the same cultivator for both corn and beans. They prefer to have the narrow-row cultivation equipment on a second tractor.

Regular Cultivator

Perhaps the easiest cultivator to adapt for narrow rows is the rear-mounted bar type. Three 28-inch rows are being cultivated by this small soybean producer.
Many growers are using big tractors and regular cultivators. Ora Denny of McLean county has grown soybeans in 21-inch rows for over 20 years. His cultivator takes six rows at a time. Ora cultivates out the early weeds and then lets the close soybeans shade out the late-germinating weeds. Some growers have simply adapted their used corn-cultivation equipment for narrow rows.

Beet or Bean Cultivator

A number of growers have obtained regular beet or bean cultivators, which are manufactured by several implement companies.
No machinery changes are necessary for harvesting. A combine can thresh narrow rows as well as 40-inch rows. Narrow-row growers pick up their yield bonus by threshing an extra row or two each trip across the field. The 22-inch rows on this central Illinois field were averaging 50 bushels per acre.
ANALYZE YOUR SITUATION

Inventory your present equipment.

Calculate the costs of converting to narrow rows.

Consider how much a 15-percent yield bonus would mean to you in additional income. If you've been getting 30 bushels per acre, the extra yield would amount to about 4 bushels.

Compare the costs of gearing up with the additional income over a period of several years.