☐ Editor's note: This article is one in a series about the concept and use of no tillage farming methods.

By Mark Watson Panhandle No-Tillage Education Coordinator

Every once in a while something comes along that makes a lot of sense. I think this is the case with forage crops in a no till crop production system integrating cattle into the farming operation.

A group of NRCS soil conservationists and producers from Burley County, N.D., have been working on a system of planting forage mixtures on dry land acres, grazing cattle on these forages and combining this with grain crop production.

Several of these gentlemen have given presentations at our local no till meetings over the past few years.

Jay Fuhrer and Ken Miller work with NRCS in Burley County. Jay and Ken have worked with producers planting forage crops of different types in fields and test plots to study different mixtures or cocktails of forages which provide good cattle grazing along with improving the quality of the soil for grain crop production.

Gabe Brown is a producer from Burley County who has also been a speaker at our local no till meetings.

Gabe has spoken about his experience with these forage mixtures and how he has improved his cattle operation, his soil, and the profitability of his operation using these forage cocktails.

Burley County, N.D., is similar to the Panhandle of Nebraska as far as annual precipitation and soil. Burley County averages 15 inches of precipitation and their soils are similar to ours in water holding capacity and variety of soils.

They have better soils along the river bottom and lighter soils along the breaks and hills as you get away from the river.

Their idea of utilizing these forage mixtures in their no till crop production systems is to make better use of the soil, sun and moisture to improve the profitability in their operations.

By growing these forage mixtures of grass and legume crops they are mimicking the native prairie.

They are also grazing the cattle on these acres in the same way the buffalo grazed the native prairie. They use high intensity grazing over short periods of time to get the best grazing possible and extend the production of the forage crop.

People with any questions on no till can contact me at 308-760-5259 or e-mail me at garbanzobeanfarmer mark@hotmail.com.

Next week: Forages II.