



Irrigation View



November 2004

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**“This 25-Year-Old T-L is as Old as I am
— and the Way It's Working It'll
Probably Still Be Sprinkling When
a Son of Mine Takes Over.”**

By Chester Peterson Jr.

Twenty-five years ago, Dallas Larsen had two good experiences: His son Lex was born and he installed his first center-pivot system, a T-L.

Now Lex is in charge of their operation near Scottsbluff, Nebraska. And, the T-L is still going around doing its job of irrigating with little or no sign of its “maturity”.

There are 400 acres of corn grown mostly for silage and 200 acres of alfalfa hay on the place. Two T-Ls, with a third being installed this year, and flood irrigation share the watering duties. Two feedlots provide a 10,000-head capacity that's turned twice annually.

Not too far away at Lusk, Wyoming, the Larsen's run a 600-cow beef herd. Irrigation there is via two pivots on corn, three pivots on grass, and eight pivots on alfalfa hay. The mode of tillage is moving more and more from conventional to minimum-till.

At both locations rye is drilled into the stalk fields after the corn is harvested for silage. This provides both winter cover and excellent grazing for stocker cattle.

“That first T-L is as old as I am. It's been pretty reliable. The way it's working it'll probably still be sprinkling when a son of mine takes over,” Larsen says with a smile.

The Larsen's T-L dealer has kept precise records on their T-L systems. Over the years these figures show they've averaged spending less than \$20 per tower annually for repairs and maintenance.



Lex Larsen, Larsen Feeding Corporation, Scottsbluff, Nebraska, with 25-year-old T-L center-pivot sprinkler system that's as old as he is. The cattle are grazing rye that was seeded into corn stalks remaining after harvest for silage the previous fall.

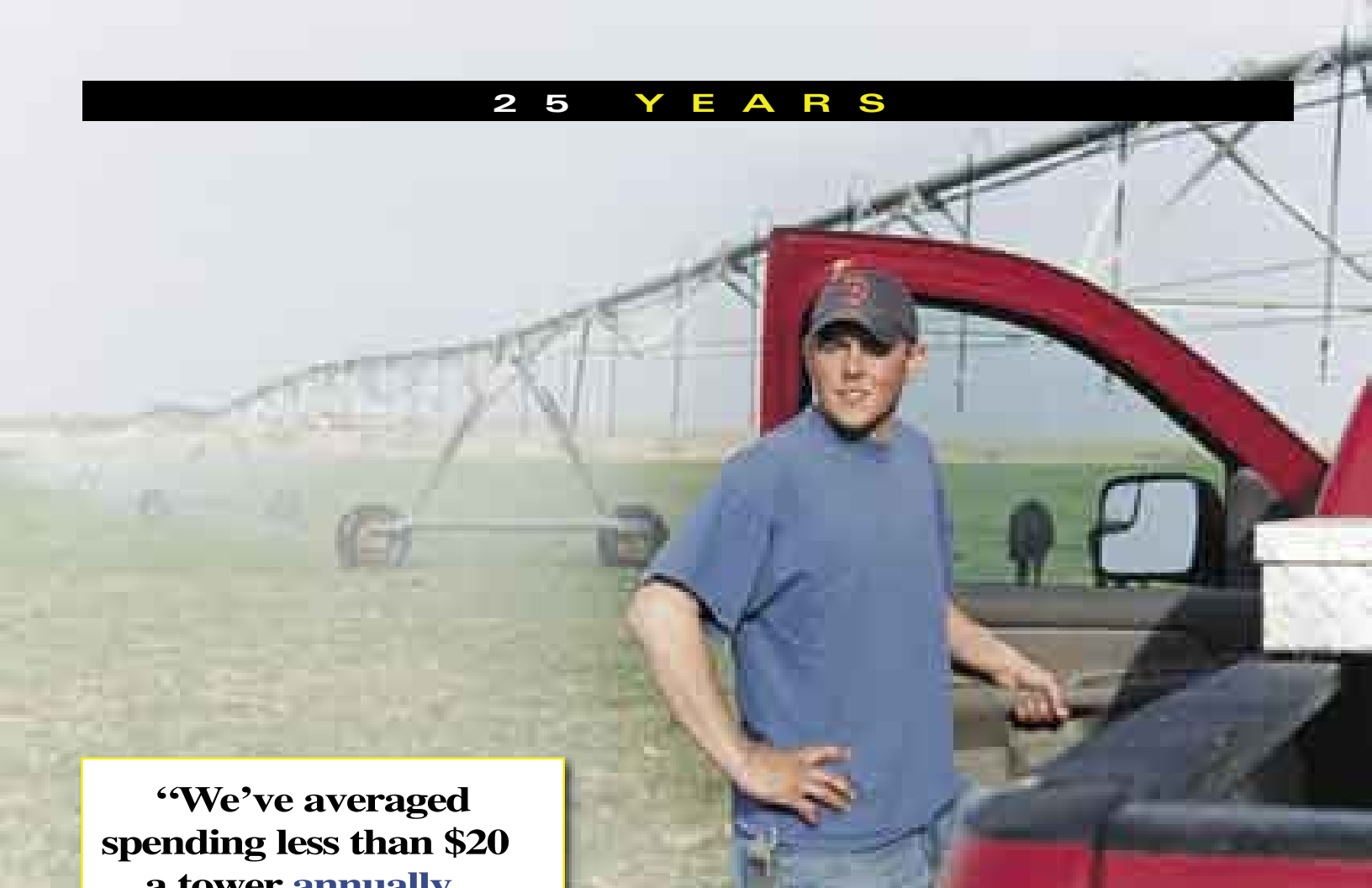


The T-L Difference.

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Check out Lex Larsen and many other success stories inside.






“We’ve averaged spending less than \$20 a tower annually for repairs and maintenance.”

The records show that their corn silage yields under sprinkler irrigation top out at 24 to 25 tons an acre. This is four to five tons an acre more than from the remaining flood-irrigated land.

“Center-pivot irrigation doesn’t take nearly as much labor as flood irrigation,” Larsen continues. “It’s two hours a day for flood as opposed to just flipping a switch and checking your gauges on the pivot.”

There’s also a big advantage in efficiency, according to Larsen. Rather than seeing water running out the end of a field with flood irrigation, the center pivot is much more efficient in getting water into the soil without wastage.

“And,” he adds, “when it’s really hot, it’s nice to know that our center-pivots can cover a crop three times faster than we could with flood irrigation.”

“Maybe the best thing about sprinkler irrigation is that it helps your morale, because you don’t see your stalks shriveling up and dying.” 

“With a T-L we have no worries about somebody getting electrocuted while working on a system.”

“When we do need to do something with a T-L,” Larsen says, “we can have an employee do most or all of what needs to be done. We don’t have to hire a \$100 an hour electrician to come out here to fix it.”

“Also, with a T-L we have no worries about somebody getting electrocuted while working on the system. A little hydraulic oil on you is better than risking electrocution.”

And, if a problem with a T-L does develop, according to Larsen almost anyone who’s been farming knows something about hydraulics. As he notes, “Even somebody new to center-pivots can dive right in and feel his way through without hurting himself.”

The main reason the first T-L system was installed and why more have been added over the years is to provide enough corn silage for the cattle operation without having to buy outside.

Larsen says that thanks to a combination of irrigation and advancements in corn hybrid yields the operation now produces more than enough corn silage for its needs on the same amount of ground.

“Designed and Built Right So Farmers Make Money With Our Systems.”

By Chester Peterson Jr.

What sets a company apart, that not only makes it the leader in its industry, but also just one of a handful of survivors of the 50 or so that began with similar hopes many decades ago? In the center-pivot irrigation business, the answers come rather readily where T-L Irrigation Company is concerned. Now celebrating its Golden Anniversary, there are a number of reasons why thousands of T-L systems are working in 44 states and more than 40 countries:

It begins with an all-important overriding company philosophy. Still at the president’s desk 50 years after founding T-L, LeRoy Thom says it’s simply, “We’re farmers. I don’t think there’s a one of our 250 employees who doesn’t have some farm connection. This makes a big difference,” he explains.

From design to manufacturing to support, the underlying thought at T-L has been and continues to be how a farmer can buy and use a system and make money with it—year after virtually maintenance-free year.

New products and modifications are always completely tested on T-L’s own fields for at least a year before being made available. Then there’s the toughness testing: Center-pivots ran a vicious 4,000 hours a year in Arizona so that in a dozen years they worked the equivalent of 40 to 50 years, and continued to irrigate.

“We wouldn’t think of selling a new product unless we tested it for at least a year ourselves on our own farms,” Thom points out. “We learned a long time ago that what might look so good on the drawing board to an engineer doesn’t always work out in the mud.”

Only T-L center-pivots operate with a unique hydrostatic design that utilizes hydraulic oil flow instead of electricity. There’s the obvious safety factor of not having to be concerned with the 480 volts of electricity that power electric systems, of course, plus less susceptibility to crippling lightning strikes.

Just as important, nearly all farmers understand hydraulics and can make most necessary repairs themselves. There’s little need to call for an expensive serviceman or be down waiting for him. Built to keep running with a minimum of maintenance also ensures T-L’s

Dave, LeRoy and Jim Thom shown together in front of T-L’s new distribution facility.



popularity in third world countries where electricians are in short supply.

T-L center-pivots operate continuously without the stops and starts of electric systems. There’s less wear and tear, and water is applied more uniformly.

You can have the best mousetrap in the world, but service is what makes repeat sales,” Thom says in expressing why T-L and its 250-plus dealers stress support.

Thoroughly tested under farm conditions sprinkler package variations enable a farmer to tailor a T-L sprinkler to any field considering wind drift, runoff, uniformity, soil type, terrain, amount of water available, pressure, and crops to be grown.


Precision Mobile Drip Irrigation (PMDI) combines the best of center-pivot with drip irrigation and is just one of T-L’s latest innovation.

In addition to the traditional galvanized steel, T-L leads the industry in also offering aluminum and stainless steel as options. Soon a spray-on coating similar to pickup bed liners will also be offered.

There doesn’t have to be the usual hassle of dealing with a lending institution when a farmer orders a T-L unit. For more than two decades, T-L has been able to offer its own financing to buyers. In addition to simplification, this also allows more flexibility in customizing a financing program for a farmer’s specific needs.

Unequaled warranties are two to three times longer than that of any competitive pivot system made.

Competitively priced, T-Ls may not always be initially the cheapest. What Thom and the T-L people think is more important to their customers is, “Building in the reliability and lower maintenance features so that the T-L is always the lowest in cost in the long run.”

“We don’t nickel and dime the farmer with a bunch of parts and down time. If we find the need to modify something on a unit, we fix it,” Thom declares. “We know that when a farmer makes money with one of our pivot systems that he’ll be back to buy more.” “So, design it right. Then make it right. That’s what a farmer would do. That’s what we’ve done for a half-century. Because, remember, we’re farmers, too.” 

“After 14 Seasons, Those Two Replacement Gearboxes Are Still In The Barn.”

By Chester Peterson Jr.

Because a day of downtime can ruin a cotton crop, Joe Rhoads, Ropesville, Texas, decided that he'd play it cautious when he purchased his first center-pivots in 1991, a pair of T-Ls.

“I bought two gearboxes and stuck them in the barn so if I needed quick repairs I'd have them handy,” he remembers. “After 14 seasons, those two replacement gearboxes are still in the barn.”

“Now I have eight T-Ls, and they all still look like new,” he adds. “So far, I've never had to call anyone out of town to fix anything. Also, we try to farm more acres per person than most farmers, and so we just don't have time for systems that don't work.”

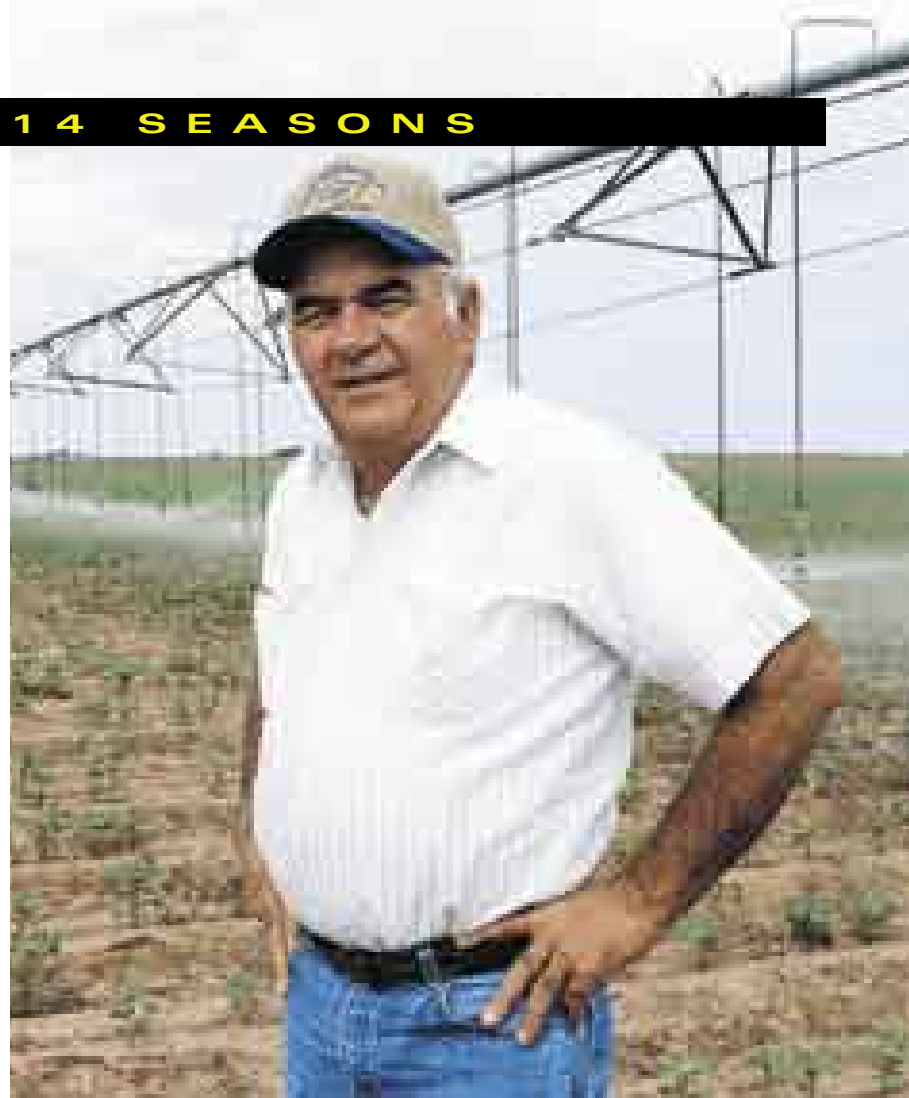
Realizing back then that he needed to vastly improve his watering efficiency due to a decreasing aquifer, Rhoades decided center-pivots were the answer. But, which brand to buy?

To benefit from the experience of other farmers, he drove more than 100 miles talking to center-pivot users and getting their recommendations.

He even talked to a trucker who told him that, due to their greater weight, three T-Ls put him over his weight limit. He said he could easily haul three of another brand. Rhoades also says he's never heard of a T-L being blown over in a strong Texas straight wind, but knew of several instances of this happening with other brands.

“The final clincher was that I read in the paper about a farmer being found dead by his electric center-pivot,” Rhoades says, “I have four sons and the man who works for me has five sons. An electric system just wasn't worth the risk.”

“However, the main reason I went with T-L was I could take care of servicing and repairing them myself,” he continues. “Some of the farmers I talked to had to wait for four or five days with a down pivot for an electrician to arrive.”



“So far, I've never had to call anyone out of town to fix anything. Also, we try to farm more acres per person than most farmers, and so we just don't have time for systems that don't work.”

Rhoades quickly learned about the difference in efficiency between row watering and center-pivot irrigation. In a side-by-side comparison of two cotton fields, one watered with an eight-inch surge system and the other with a T-L center pivot, “Both ran the same gallons per minute per acre,” he reports. “The row watered field made 601 pounds an acre and the T-L field made 1,051 pounds,”

“The main reason I went to T-L was that it was something I could take care of servicing and repairing myself.”

He concluded that his ability to put water on so the cotton was never stressed made the difference. The T-L could give a little drink twice a week, while it took almost a month to get across the row-watered field

To minimize evaporation today, Rhoades utilizes drag hoses that deliver a wet strip 20 inches wide down the middle of every other furrow. This concentrates the water and eliminates 75 percent of the evaporation area.

“I could have bought cheaper systems,” he observes, “But, I believe you get what you pay for. I felt then, and still do today, that T-Ls are worth any extra cost.”

Bob Faver farms near Dalhart, Texas, where for the last five years rainfall has been roughly a third of the normal 12 to 14 inches annual average.

He says his number one reason for liking his T-Ls is, “The continuous movement that's not offered by an electric center-pivot. For some crops this is a big issue. Plus, without all that starting and stopping there's less wear and tear on the machine.”


“It's just a ballpark guess, but I'd say my T-Ls are surely 20 percent less trouble than my electrics.” He comments that while his ten-year-old T-Ls will eventually need some refurbishing, this will be mostly replacing hoses and probably little else.



He says his number one reason for liking his T-Ls is, “The continuous movement that's not offered by an electric center-pivot. For some crops this is a big issue. Plus, without all that starting and stopping there's less wear and tear on the machine.”

“The structure of the T-L machine is excellent. It will be there a long time,” he says. The T-L is a good quality product. About all we have to do before every season is change filters, make sure the gearboxes are full, and check for leaks, and then go.”

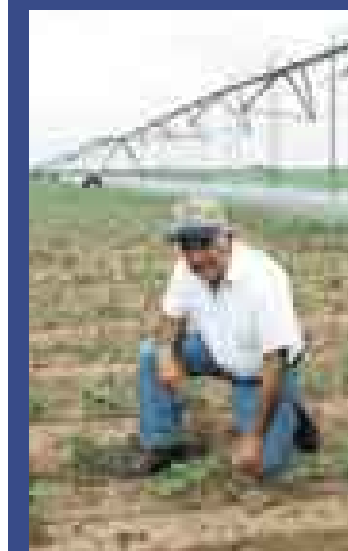
On the other hand, his electrics always seem to have a switch or a motor that's bad, he notes.

“The nice thing about hydraulics is that I can fix any problem myself. That's not the case with an electric system. I've never been comfortable with electricity either,” Faver adds. “If you're just not thinking one time, then you could be dead.” 

“About all we have to do before every season is change filters, make sure the gearboxes are full, and check for leaks, and then go.”

NO-TILL Helps Provide Ground Cover

Now in his fifth year of all no-till, Rhoads recalls what finally prompted his decision. Frowning as he spoke he said, “After going across the cotton 13 times fighting sand, working seven days a week, dog-tired, we still ended up losing our crop. We knew we had to do something to get some ground cover.”



After his first year of no-till farming, he thought a 3-inch rain had completely missed his cotton field since he saw water running off his neighbor's land and not his. In his view, this was an excellent illustration of no-till effectiveness. The water was actually being retained in his field.

“T-L System Runs 41,000 Hours And Applies 430 Million Gallons Of Water—In Just 5-1/2 Years.”

By Chester Peterson Jr.

There's one almost sure thing in Laverne, Oklahoma: The T-L center-pivot just outside of town at the old refinery clean-up project will be running—day and night, spring, summer, and fall, and most of the winter, too.

For the last five-and-a-half years it's been operating at least 85 percent of the time, according to Boog Evans, the contractor in charge of operating the unit. The system is just a shade more than halfway through a ten-year cleanup program.

Evans figures in that limited period of time the heavily used T-L has been handling its sprinkling chores for more than 41,000 hours. At an average 175 gallons a minute, 430,301,000 gallons of water have flowed through its nozzles.

When the refinery closed down it was found that petroleum products were working their way closer and closer to the town's wells. At first it was thought that water “cleaned” by bubbling air through it could be sent to the river via an old pipeline. The pipeline had become porous, however, and Plan B was to keep the water on site.

Pumps move water from wells dug around the perimeter of the old refinery to one of several “cleaning” buildings. From there the water goes to a holding basin from which the water is pumped to the adjacent T-L center-pivot.

The average application rate on native grass seeded on former cropland is between 150 to 200 gallons a minute. A local farmer handles the hay harvest chores.

Like the famous battery bunny, the T-L system has just kept going and going and going, according to Evans. There have been only two exceptions over the years.

One is when Evans sees a forecast for a few days with below freezing temperatures. When that happens he pulls down the holding basin by increasing flow through the system before temporarily shutting it down.

The other exception was a tornado that tried its best to roll up the center-pivot into a steel ball! Evans says,




Like the famous battery bunny, the T-L system has just kept going and going and going, according to Evans. There have been only two exceptions over the years.

“The T-L dealer has always been only a phone call away.” In two weeks the dealer had the unit running again, and it gamely continued to apply water to the hayland, although with two fewer towers.

While it took a twister to do it, the only real trouble Evans has experienced with the T-L system came immediately after the storm. The jerking around and tumbling the pivot endured caused some hydraulic fluid leakage. However, after chasing down and stopping the leaks, he reports virtually no hydraulic fluid has been used for the past year-and-a-half.

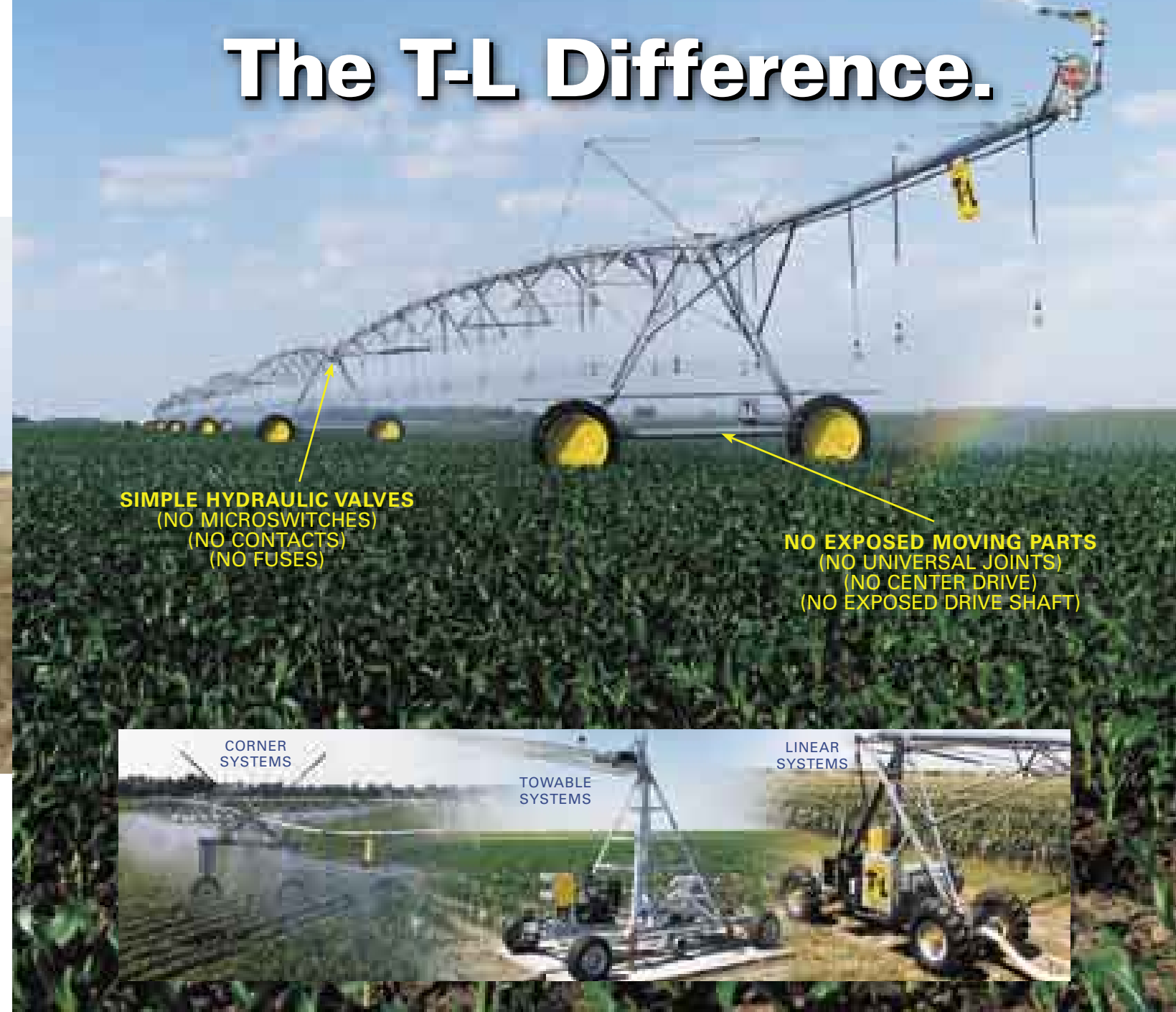
As for other repairs, the records show that only \$1,501.23 has been spent. That figures out to just \$273 a year or 3-1/2¢ an hour for a center-pivot that's come as close to continuous operation as just about any such unit in the country.

It's actually been so reliable that Evans reports that he now schedules a single visit a week to check the gearboxes and tire pressures, even with mostly 24/7 operation.

“This T-L has been pretty well maintenance-free. It's a great system,” he sums up. “How long will it last at the rate it's being used? I don't know—it looks like it could almost last forever.” 

For more information - mark “It's A Great System” on reader response card pg 8-9.

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“Our T-Ls Are Giving Us As Much As 300 Percent Increase In Sugarcane Yields.”

By Chester Peterson Jr.

For years, average yields of sugarcane under flood irrigation have traditionally been 50 tons per hectare (about 2.5 acres U.S.) for The Sugar Company of Jamaica. That typical yield has been improved considerably in fields converted to significantly more efficient pivot irrigation systems. Owned by the Jamaican Government, the operation has 100,000 acres in five Jamaican Estates, 46,000 acres in sugarcane.

“Our pivot systems are giving us as much as 300 percent increase in sugarcane yields,” Operations Manager John Gayle reports.

“We’ve sustained average yields 150 to 160 tons an acre in our first two crops with them, thus we are getting three times the production from the same wells, with fewer pumping hours.”

A few years ago mobile traveling sprinklers were tried in an effort to both increase water efficiency and lower labor needs. However, they required high pressure and more horsepower to work, and the cost of energy is an important factor on the island.

Several years ago, as an experiment, two center pivot systems were installed, one an electrically driven unit, and the other a hydrostatically driven T-L. The result? “Since then we haven’t purchased any more electrical systems, and now we have 30 T-Ls in our sugarcane fields,” Gayle adds.

“The T-Ls have made a big impact on our labor needs, too,” he says. “Where we used to average two hectares per worker, in the T-L irrigated fields there’s basically no one there while irrigating. The Company was initially projecting a five-year payback, with a three-year payback as the best-case scenario. However, according to Gayle, the increase in sugarcane tonnage resulted in an additional annual \$4,800 (U.S) per acre gross profit.

“We’re seeing a one-year payback on our T-Ls,” Gayle explains. “And, that’s not considering the savings from less labor and power costs either.”

Another big savings may also be in store. Sugarcane produces one crop per year, with an average stand life of five years before production declines too much. Obviously, shorter stand life translates to higher production costs,



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thus lengthening stand life is a major Company goal. “We’re convinced that fields irrigated with our center pivot systems will be able to go for a longer period, six to seven years or more, before having the major expense of replanting,” Gayle says.

“Our planting material is young cane. By having to replant less acreage we’ll have more production and less machinery cost, too.”

Lessening the risk of electrocution for employees was another major factor in choosing T-L hydrostatic systems over electric.

Our reasons for picking T-L hydrostatically driven systems versus electrically driven systems were many: Although large yield increases were also experienced, other negative issues surfaced; Electrical problems were so frequent that full-time technicians had to be employed to keep them running, and due to their stop-start operation, gravel had to be dumped in their deepened wheel tracks in order for the units to make their rounds.



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and help keep the environment cleaner. The Company expects to start construction of an ethanol plant in 2005, and have it operational the following year.

Boosting yields by a factor of three, of course, normally creates three times the wastage from the sugarcane refining process. This, though, is good news, not bad.

When sugarcane is crushed and the juice extracted, the trash that’s left is called Bagasse. It’s a dry material that has high fiber cellulose content. The Company is close to seeing the sugarcane refinery waste used to fuel electrical power to both operate the new ethanol plant and power the Company’s other needs. Excess power will be sold to the island nation’s power grid. This will replace energy now

“On the other hand,” according to Gayle, “Our T-Ls just keep on working.” Maintenance has been low. “In fact, we’ve encountered more difficulty with our one electrical center pivot system, than all 30 of our hydraulic systems.”

The few problems encountered have been primarily due to their utilizing older water supply pipelines and wells pumping sand. This has been solved by using sand traps and installing new PVC pipe.

“Our workmen are much more comfortable with the T-L hydraulic center pivots,” he continues. “Troubleshooting a hydraulic system is simpler for our labor to learn.”

Gayle envisions a number of important changes being implemented in the next few years:


First, a switch from applying dry fertilizer to “spoon feeding” liquid fertilizers to sugarcane similar to the way many U.S. corn growers do now to improve their yields.

Second, since the center pivots provide reliable irrigation, a just-signed agreement with a U.S. company will provide a market for papayas and peppers.

Third, is a form of diversification. The Jamaican Sugar Company is seriously investigating how the greatly enhanced yields from center pivot irrigated sugarcane could be converted to ethanol. In addition to lowering the island’s need to import virtually all its petroleum needs, there’s also the tourism-based economy to consider. Ethanol usage would certainly lessen the pollutant effects of engines using gasoline

“In fact, we’ve encountered more difficulty with our one electrical center pivot system, than all 30 of our hydraulic systems.”

being purchased to run deep-well pumps and center pivots and serve as an additional source of income.

“I can tell you that we’re definitely going to be installing more center pivots,” Gayle sums up. “As you can guess, all indications are they will be T-Ls.” 

‘It’s as Different As Day And Night Where The T-L’s Water Stops And Dryland Begins.’

By Chester Peterson Jr.

Although his annual rainfall is in theory more than adequate to produce good crops, the problem is that it doesn’t always arrive when needed. And, some years are just simply dry, according to Harry Wimberly.

His 1,500-acre Wimco Farms is near Branchville, South Carolina. Just as soon as he could acquire enough land in one plot with space enough to install a center-pivot, he bought a T-L system four years ago.

“Since then, my irrigated corn has averaged yielding 100 bushels more an acre than my dryland corn,” Wimberly reports. “If my dryland corn makes 50 bushels an acre, my irrigated corn will yield 150. If the dryland averages 100 bushels, the irrigated corn will make 200 bushels an acre.

“The advantages of irrigation are so obvious,” he adds. “It’s as different as day and night where the T-L’s water stops.”

The year his T-L was making its first circles was really dry. Yet the yield under it was so much better than his other corn, without supplemental irrigation, that Wimberly figures his center-pivot paid for itself in just its first season.

In addition to the center-pivot’s 100-acre coverage, he next installed an 85-acre T-L lateral system. With dual end guns it waters a narrow field that’s 6,400 feet long and 740-foot wide and that exhibits a definite curve.

“I was amazed, but this lateral will walk around the corner. Keep the furrow cleaned out and it will go wherever I want it to go. In fact,” Wimberly smiles, “I think it would go around the world if it just had a track to follow.”

What first appealed to him about T-Ls was that, “They’re the simplest piece of equipment that I could possibly run. Everything runs off one diesel engine, so I don’t have to worry about electric motors, shorts, or lightning storms, or only rarely getting out line.”

On the other hand, Wimberly points out that the worst that can happen with a T-L is to have a hydraulic line break. He hasn’t had that problem yet.

He says if he does it will be a whole lot easier to spot an oil leak than to attempt to trace an electrical short. He



“They’re the simplest piece of equipment that I could possibly run. Everything runs off one diesel engine, so I don’t have to worry about electric motors, shorts, or lightning storms, or only rarely getting out line. Simplicity. I’ll say that word again: A T-L is just a simple machine to operate.”

emphasizes, “Simplicity. I’ll say that word again: A T-L is just a simple machine to operate.”

This also means, he says, that T-L’s are so easy to run that he can send almost anybody down to either of his units to push the button that cranks up an engine and immediately start irrigating.

His farming philosophy is:
1. If you have a field big enough to install a center-pivot, do it.
2. Make that center-pivot system a T-L.

“One of my neighbors runs all different brands of sprinklers,” Wimberly comments. “However, since he’s seen the T-Ls work, I think we’ve got him converted.”

His farming philosophy is: 1. If you have a field big enough to install a center-pivot, do it. 2. Make that center-pivot system a T-L.

“We’re all out here to make a profit, since without profit we wouldn’t stay in business,” Wimberly says. “But, there’s also that feeling of accomplishing something, the pride of self-achievement. That’s another benefit of having an irrigation system that just makes farming a little more pleasurable.”



“If my dryland corn makes 50 bushels an acre, my irrigated corn will yield 150. If the dryland averages 100 bushels, the irrigated corn will make 200 bushels an acre.”

Talk about varied center-pivot experience! Pinckney Thompson operates 20 of them of four different brands, covering from 47 to 300 acres, and that were installed from 1978 to three years ago.

Talk about varied center-pivot experience! Pinckney Thompson operates 20 systems of four different brands, covering from 47 to 300 acres that were installed between 1978 and 2001.

Half of his 5,000 acres at Vance, South Carolina, are irrigated. According to Thompson, it’s because, “It’s like life or death, whether you stay in business or not. For any kind of consistency we have to irrigate.”

And yes, the last two pivots set up were T-L towables for several reasons. First, it was more economical to drill one well and run multiple sites, thus spreading out the cost of the well and pump. Second, his neighbors who had towable center-pivots of other brands always told him how difficult they were to move.

Thanks to diesel engines, the T-Ls helped the budget since he didn’t have to run any wire. And, Thompson says he and two men can move a T-L from circle to circle in just 40 minutes.

This year, for example, the T-Ls were in corn first, then towed over to water herbicide in peanuts, then it was back to irrigate corn until mature, and finally to the peanut field again.

Basically, according to Thompson, he’s getting the equivalent of two center-pivots for the price of one.

“I had aerial photographs taken of all my center-pivot fields two years ago,” Thompson reports. “I could see a difference between corn under our continuous movement T-Ls and corn under the stop-start electric center-pivots. The corn was just more uniform in the T-L circles.

“Usually better uniformity results in higher yields,” he adds. “I don’t know if I can pinpoint an exact yield advantage for the T-Ls, but I estimate it would be another five to six bushels an acre.”

Thompson says that, “My other 18 center-pivots operate on 480 volts. The employees and I respect that, but when it’s not there, like on the T-Ls, it makes working much nicer. Also, with every lightning storm I just cross my fingers that I won’t have to replace a bunch of wires.”


In the last three years he’s had to replace wiring, up to two miles long in some instances, vital to his various electric units—at a cost of \$30,000.

I had aerial photographs taken of my entire center-pivot fields two years ago,” Thompson reports.
“I could see a difference between corn under our continuous movement T-L’s and corn under our electric center-pivots. The corn was just more uniform in the T-L circles.”

That, of course, will never be a future expense for his T-Ls. So far, in three years Thompson says he’s spent less than \$50 on both systems.

In his shop, Thompson stockpiles a pallet of gearboxes for his electric systems. On hand for his T-Ls: One five gallon bucket of oil.

The first start-up in the spring also differs between the electrics and his T-Ls. As he says, “Due to dirt daubers or water condensation, we usually spend the next three weeks fixing the electric systems. With the T-Ls, though, all we’re dealing with is a diesel engine turning a hydraulic pump. We just fire them up and let them run.”

As for the economics of irrigation itself, Thompson says that he can usually make the payment on an irrigation system and still have as much money left over as he would from a decent dryland yield. 

For more information - mark “Day and Night” on reader response card pg 8-9.

“Safety First!”

By Chester Peterson Jr.

“I think about a good friend of mine who was killed ten years ago by an electric center-pivot sprinkler every single time I’m at the control box of one of mine,” Mike Hajek, North Judson, Indiana, frowns.

“I’ve tried to safely ground the system at the control box of each of my four electric sprinklers by standing on a plank resting on old rubber tires. An electrician told me that this way while any shock I receive may knock me down, it most likely won’t kill me,” he adds.

“I also think and worry how some day my son, Brendan, who’s seven years old now, will also be walking up to electric center-pivot control boxes. That’s why, from a safety standpoint, I wanted to try a hydraulic, non-electric center-pivot sprinkler.”

Hajek farms 800 to 900 acres of the corn and soybeans typical to his region, although a majority of his acres are in specialty crops. He has 1,000 acres of peppermint and spearmint, plus 200 acres of potatoes.

A recent summer was exceptionally dry. His mint crop needed 3/10 to a half-inch of water in each of 20 revolutions while his potatoes needed a half-inch application a total of 29 times. He also does some fertigation via his pivot systems.

Without irrigation, according to Hajek, “We wouldn’t have harvested any mint or potatoes. It would have been a zero yield.



Seven-year-old Brendan likes to accompany his father, Mike Hajek, to the field. Hajek bought his first T-L Irrigation system, because he wants safer conditions for when his son later starts working with him.



“Sprinkler irrigation is a good insurance policy, especially on my sandy soils. Without irrigation I wouldn’t have been able to even get the crop into the ground or, for that matter, get a contract to grow potatoes,” he says.

“A specialty crop is almost certain to pay off a sprinkler the first year, Hajek believes.

This past summer his new hydrostatic T-L Irrigation center-pivot sprinkler not only allayed his safety concerns, but also proved itself in other ways, he adds. “My big payoff was in no downtime. The T-L worked 450 hours its first season, and never went down for any reason. Not once. It’s nice to know that every time I start it up it’ll complete the circle,” Hajek continues. “It’s effective, dependable, and just a tremendous system.”


He recalls that virtually the only maintenance time he put in on the T-L was to check the tire pressures.

“While my T-L did cost a few dollars more than an electric system, it offered some things they didn’t. And, I also think it’s going to be a longer-lasting system.” He points out that a T-L unit is a much simpler system than any electric system with its many little electric components. If any problems develop in the T-L, a simple walk-by should spot them. On the other hand, as Hajek points out, “With an electric, any stoppage could be due to one of a 1,000 different things.”

Recently, he experienced a considerable amount of trouble during the growing season with one of his electrics. For some unknown reason its electrical terminals continued to corrode. The unit was down long enough during the hottest period that the crop it was supposed to be irrigating suffered drought damage.

Another feature Hajek liked about his T-L unit was the control system that told him exactly how fast the end tower was moving in inches per minute.

He checked accuracy and uniformity of coverage by putting a rain gauge in various places within the circle. Hajek observes that, “If I set the water amount on the controller for, say, 3/10 of an inch of water, that’s exactly what I’d later find in the rain gauge.

“My T-L system got the job done that dry summer. It was the one sprinkler that I didn’t have to worry about for any reason—I love it!” 

For more information - mark “Safety First” on reader response card pg 8-9.

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Why He Likes His T-Ls: Safety, Dependability, And Ease Of Maintenance.

By Jimmy C. Reed Jr.

Kenny Rodgers, owner of RR Farms, believes he knows a good thing when he sees it. With the experience derived from producing crops for 30 years near the Mississippi Delta town of Belzoni, he's developed a keen eye for products that will help him remain profitable.

"Although I now use only stationary center-pivots, I once had several towable systems," he says. "Moving towable electric pivots from one well to the next is time-consuming and labor intensive. That's because we had to jack all the wheels up and rotate them 90 degrees before the system could be towed."



The lesson Rodgers says he's learned from this: Investing in dependable irrigation equipment is an absolute necessity for profitable crop production.

"When I bought my first T-L system in 1997, I was amazed," he continues. "With its hydrostatic drive providing hydraulic muscle, I could rotate tires in 45 seconds instead of the 45 minutes needed with electric pivots. That convinced me that T-L is a product based on sound technology—and therefore an equally sound investment."

Rodgers, who normally plants 3,000 acres of cotton and 2,400 acres of soybeans, is steadily expanding his irrigation capability. In addition to seven center-pivots, he also flood irrigates some fields with poly pipe. He's now able to water two-thirds of his row-crop acreage.

In his area, inadequate rainfall is an ever-present threat. Indeed, looking back on three decades of farming, he recalls only one solitary year when Mother Nature provided all the water his crops really needed.

Normally, at least four of every ten crops must be produced under droughty conditions, too. During virtually every summer a certain amount of supplemental watering is required for successful crops.

The lesson Rodgers says he's learned from this: Investing in dependable irrigation equipment is an absolute necessity for profitable crop production.

Here are some of the things Rodgers will consider when he prepares to spend money on irrigation equipment: "I want the best there is in terms of safety, dependability, and ease of maintenance," he adds.

"Quite frankly, I've always had to exercise great caution when working on electric center-pivots. When they're running, you've got a dangerous combination that can spell disaster with water, an excellent conductor of electricity, and 480 volts of electricity.

"I've heard of people who were electrocuted while working on these systems. I, myself, have had several close calls, even melting a few screwdrivers in the process. The hydraulic technology that makes T-L irrigation the industry leader totally eliminates this danger."

Now in their eighth season of operation, Rodgers' T-L center-pivots have outpaced his electric systems in dependability. Their hydraulic power provides for



Now in their eighth season of operation, Rodgers' T-L center-pivots have outpaced his electric systems in dependability.

continuous uninterrupted movement of the system's components as they work together to rotate the system in its circle, regardless of the speed required to accomplish his targeted application rate.

This isn't the case with his electric center-pivots. With them, stop-and-go action and power surges increase wear and tear on system components.

Rodgers points out that the total absence of electricity within the T-L hydraulic system means he never arrives at a center-pivot early in the morning, only to find that it has shut down during the night due to a short in the electrical circuitry.

"From mid-July to mid-August is historically the driest period in our growing season," he continues. "It's also when cotton must have ample water to complete the filling of bolls. During this time my pivots must run continuously, unless we get lucky and catch a rain or two," he says.

"It's a comfort to know that with my T-Ls I can be assured of steadily giving my thirsty crops all the water they need. They don't have control boxes on top like the electric systems, nor center-drive electric motors that can be shorted out. For me, T-L fills the bill when it comes to dependability."


But, as a growing number of satisfied customers in the Mississippi Delta have realized, ease of maintenance is where T-L irrigation really shines, according to Rodgers. In terms of both the time involved to maintain the equipment and money spent on maintenance items, a comparison of Rodgers' T-L systems with his electric systems shows that T-L is clearly ahead.



As a growing number of satisfied customers in the Mississippi Delta have realized, ease of maintenance is where T-L irrigation really shines, according to Rodgers.

His T-L dealer thoroughly inspects his T-Ls every year before the growing season begins. He services the drive trains, checks the power system, and follows a complete preventive maintenance checklist to ensure trouble-free operation during the season.

"The hydraulic technology that makes T-L irrigation the industry leader totally eliminates this danger."

"Over the years, I've observed that I spend one-third as much for maintenance of my T-L systems as I do for the electric systems. And, best of all, the T-L systems are so well engineered that I have no doubt they'll provide at least 20 years of dependable service." Rodgers predicts. 

For more information - mark "Good Thing" on reader response card pg 8-9.