

# Rubber Belted Tracks Coming On Strong!

Rubber belted tracks, once the sole domain of Caterpillar, are literally busting out all over. Caterpillar and its popular Challenger is being challenged by new domestic competition, plus new competition from England and Australia. In addition to tractors and combines, other equipment — including large grain carts and manure spreaders — are sporting new “compaction proof” rubber tracks. Here’s a roundup of latest new developments. *The Editors.*



## Forage Harvester Fitted With Rubber Cat Tracks

Mason Dixon Farms, Gettysburg, Penn., mounted Caterpillar’s rubber-tracked drive system on a home-built 6-row 500 hp silage chopper. They’ve also mounted Caterpillar tracks onto two 39-ft. long custom-built semi-trailers.

The chopper loads silage into the semi-trailers which have “walking” floors that rear-unload silage into 12 trench silos.

“The tracks on the chopper are 30 in. wide and 14 ft. long and are driven by hydraulic motors. We used Caterpillar’s Mobile Track system, which is the track system they sell for use on combines and other powered equipment. The non-driven tracks on the trailers are 2 ft. wide and 12 ft. long. We built our own mounting system for them, using truck wheels for idlers and the same rubber track used on Caterpillar’s Challenger tractor,” says a farm spokesman.

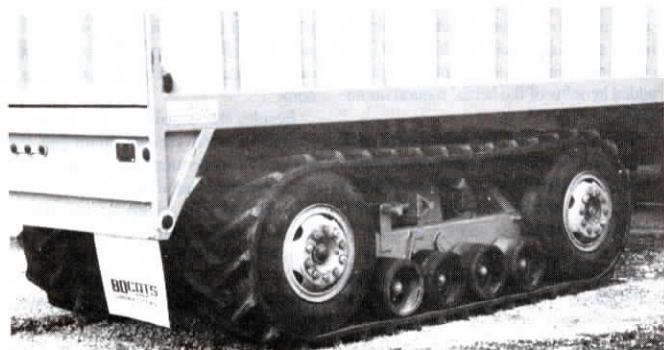
“We like the reduced compaction and ability to harvest in adverse conditions. Rubber tracks pay for themselves in increased yields due to lower compaction. The yield difference was particularly noticeable this year because of wet weather. Even where we use high flotation tires our ground is compacted quite a bit. Rubber tracks provide added flotation for moving big loads through wet spots without getting stuck and without tearing up the field. The result is more timely harvest. They pull

easier than wheels which means less fuel consumption and greater efficiency in transport from field to silo. Because the trailers pull easier we were able to lengthen them from 28 to 32 ft. Each trailer now holds 32 tons.”

Mason Dixon Farms has built three sets of mounting systems for non-driven rubber tracks so far. Two of them are mounted on their semi-trailers. Gehl Co. has been demonstrating the third set of tracks on one of its manure spreaders this year. Mason Dixon Farms plans to manufacture the track system for sale in the future on various farm implements. The tracks are expected to cost about one third more than high flotation tires.

Caterpillar has conducted compaction studies in cooperation with Iowa State University for the past six years. Track-equipped tractors have demonstrated up to a 5% yield advantage over wheel-tractors, according to James Gee, Caterpillar engineer. “Those tests have only compared the effects of spring tillage work. When we start using tracks on combines and grain wagons at harvest, we may see considerably more than a 5% yield increase,” he adds.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mason Dixon Farms, 1800 Mason Dixon Road, Gettysburg, Penn. 17325 (ph 717 334-4056).



## Kinze “Sof-Trak” System

If you’ve been looking for ways to “compaction proof” manure tank wagons, grain carts or other heavy towed equipment, Kinze Manufacturing’s “Sof-Trak” system may be the answer.

Still under experimental field testing, it features a non-driven rubber-belted running gear which serves as a universal carrier for several pieces of equipment, such as a manure spreader, spray tank or grain cart. The carrier is equipped with a special frame which makes it easy for one person, working alone, to mount or dismount equipment.

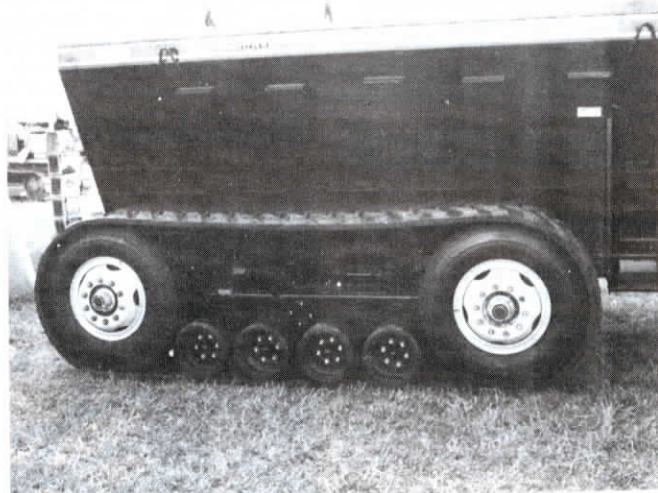
Kinze buys the rubber track from Caterpillar. The under-carriage and mid-wheels are Kinze-built.

Here’s how estimated cost of the experimental “Soft Track” system pencils out:

Kinze sells its popular 640 model grain cart for \$8,950. You can get it equipped with conventional rubber tires (24.5 by 32) and adjustable axle for an additional \$4,758, or with a rubber non-powered “Sof-Trak” for an additional \$20,000 to \$25,000 (prices have not yet been set for the experimental system). The latter cost would then be spread over however many pieces of equipment you use on the universal carrier.

For the past two years, Kinze has offered non-interchangeable rubber tracks as a factory-equipped option on its 640 and 840 grain carts.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kinze Mfg., PO Box 806, Williamsburg, Iowa 52361 (319 668-1300).



Holt-Refakis, a Caterpillar dealer in Columbus, Ohio, recently exhibited this Gehl manure spreader fitted with rubber tracks built by Mason Dixon Farms. The company, which operates throughout the state of Ohio, will work with customers to fit the compaction-cutting tracks to most any trailing farm equipment. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Holt-Refakis, 5252 Walcott Ct., Columbus, Ohio 43228 (ph 614 878-2287).