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## Agriculture, Gun and Heavy Equipment Guide

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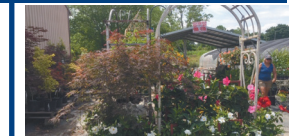
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# MAINTENANCE KEY TO FUNCTIONING FARMS

The family automobile is not  
 the only piece of equipment  
 that requires routine upkeep  
 to ensure it is operating  
 properly.

Life on a farm can come  
 to a screeching halt if farm  
 equipment is not properly  
 maintained. Farmers invest  
 hundreds of thousands  
 of dollars on agricultural  
 equipment, such as  
 tractors, tillers, hoppers,  
 and dozers. Adhering to  
 maintenance schedules  
 can prevent breakdowns  
 and decrease the need for  
 potentially costly emergency  
 repairs.

## KEEP IT CLEAN

Cleaning the surface of  
 equipment can go a long  
 way toward keeping it  
 operating smoothly. Use a  
 pressure washer to remove  
 caked-on mud and other

debris. Titan iron suppliers  
 recommend quickly  
 washing equipment after  
 usage so that substances  
 do not have the chance to  
 harden.

## LEARN THE EQUIPMENT

Over time, it is possible  
 to employ your senses of  
 sight, sound and even smell  
 to determine if equipment  
 is working properly.  
 Familiarize yourself with  
 the owner's manual so you  
 can troubleshoot minor  
 problems. Any unusual  
 sounds, odors or responses  
 from the gear should be  
 noted.

## ROUTINE MAINTENANCE CHECKS

Routinely inspect hoses,  
 fittings, and seals to ensure  
 they are in good working  
 condition. Be sure fluids,  
 such as coolant and oil,  
 are at the proper levels.  
 Check and replace filters  
 as needed. Tires need to  
 be properly inflated, and  
 inspect the battery for

corrosion or other signs  
 that it may need to be  
 replaced. Check belts for  
 cracks. Tour the exterior of  
 the equipment looking at  
 signals and lights to ensure  
 they are in proper working  
 order. Hardware should be  
 tightened and any missing  
 pieces replaced.

Heavy farm equipment  
 needs motor oil, hydraulic  
 oil and filters changed more  
 frequently than automobiles.  
 Such equipment also  
 may need more frequent  
 lubrication of chains and  
 cables. Always check and  
 inspect equipment prior to  
 jobs requiring heavy and  
 extended usage.

## EXPECT SOME WELDING


Have a knowledgeable  
 welder on call to make  
 repairs as needed, or  
 develop your skills to a point  
 where you feel comfortable  
 making your own spot  
 repairs. The experts at  
 Miller, producers of welding  
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 surface area and removing

any paint, oil or corrosion  
 from the metal area that  
 needs repairing can make  
 for smooth, durable welds.  
 Multi-process welding  
 generators and accessories  
 can ensure the right welds  
 for repairs in the field or in  
 the shop.

Maintenance on farm  
 equipment helps keep  
 operations running along  
 and protects expensive  
 investments. FC18A406

**SOCIAL MEDIA TEXT:**  
 Farmers invest hundreds  
 of thousands of dollars on  
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## ALABAMA BEGINNING FARMER PROGRAM

The Alabama Beginning Farmers Project is funded by grants from the USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program (Awards 2015-04598 & 2018-02936). The overall project implementation plan involves collaboration with a wide range of institutions, producer groups, and nonprofit organizations for supporting beginning farmers statewide. In collaboration with Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Crotoquina, Farmscape Solutions, and The United Christian Community Association, the BFRD Program provides science-based information and consultation to beginning farmers, develops new educational resources, and sustains a statewide network of producers to strengthen the local food

movement that is inclusive of low-resource farmers and military veterans.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Provide science-based information and consultation to beginning farmers.
- Support and collaborate with third-party educational programs.
- Develop new educational resources (e-curriculum, phone app, printed materials).
- Sustain a statewide network of producers to strengthen the local food movement that is inclusive of low resource farmers and military veterans.

For more information, visit [alabamabeginningfarmer.com](http://alabamabeginningfarmer.com).

## EMERGENCY HANDBOOK IBOOK

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has an iBook to help families, businesses and communities prepare for storms and clean up after they pass. The Emergency Handbook is a comprehensive resource for emergency planning, preparation and storm recovery.

Built on research-based knowledge from Auburn University and other land-grant institutions including Clemson University, the University of Florida and Mississippi State University, it also draws on resources like the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### TOPICS

The Emergency Handbook contains more than 100

pages in four broad categories including People and Pets, Home and Business, Landscape and Garden, and Farms and Livestock.

### PREPARATION

- Stock the basics for emergencies
- Caregivers guide for sheltering and evacuating
- Caring for pets during storms and evacuations
- Helping children cope
- Food storage charts – indicating how long food is safe to eat after the power goes out

### RECOVERY

#### Personal safety after a storm

- Threats from Fire Ants, snakes and other wildlife after a storm
- Reentering and cleaning up a flooded home
- Recovering family treasures
- Saving damaged trees

### FEATURE VIDEOS

- Alabama's Wild Weather
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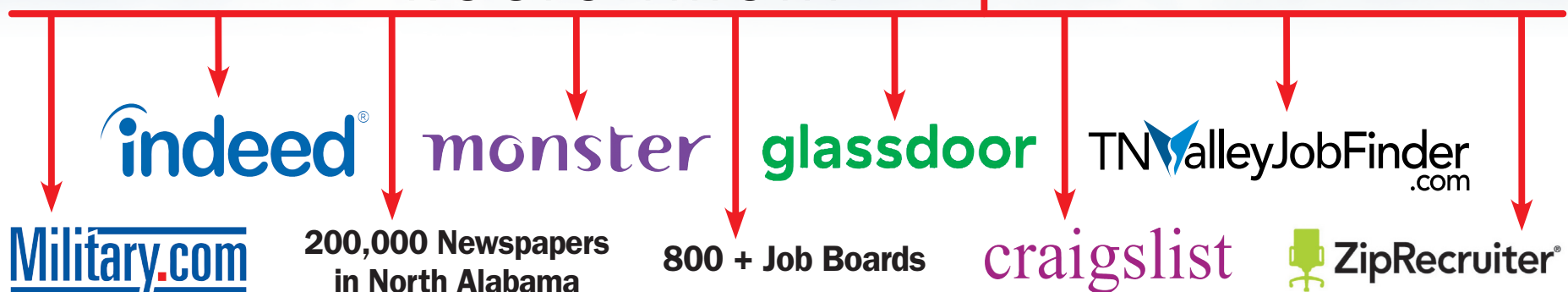


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## AUTOMATIC SECTION CONTROL TECHNOLOGY FOR ROW CROP PLANTERS

Automatic section control (ASC) technology for planters has gained interest among growers because of its potential savings and other benefits. Automatic section control is also referred to as auto-swath or row clutches when talking about planters. As the name suggests, this technology improves planting efficiency by automatically turning OFF planter sections or individual rows in areas that have been previously planted (e.g., headlands or point rows) or areas designated as no-plant zones (e.g., grassed waterways, terraces, outside a field boundary).

ASC can also automatically turn sections or rows back ON when the planter moves into an area to be planted. Figure 1 illustrates a manually controlled planter by the tractor operator versus an ASC-equipped planter with individual row control and section control. Without ASC, the operator would typically need to decide when to stop planting and would plant into the previously planted area to ensure 100 percent coverage. Figure 1(a) also shows that the decision time to stop planting can also play a role in the total double-planted area. With ASC, the decision making is handled within the technology either in sections or individual rows as illustrated in figure 1(b). Figure 2 shows the results of reducing double-planted areas using ASC and, thereby, providing direct seed savings.

Currently, equipment manufacturers are offering ASC technology as an

option on new planters. Third-party companies also provide add-on options. The technology can be installed on some older planters. Consult an equipment manufacturer or third-party vendor to determine compatibility of the ASC technology for the specific planter model. Several benefits beyond seed savings exist for ASC, but it is important to understand the components and their functionality in order to maximize benefits at the farm level. This publication discusses the various aspects of ASC on planters.

### BENEFITS

The primary tangible benefit of using ASC on planters is the seed savings through reduction of double- and triple-planted areas of the field. A two-year study conducted in 2010 and 2011 using the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station at Auburn University reported input savings ranging between 1 percent and 12 percent per field

with an average savings of 4.3 percent on seed cost for a farm when using ASC. This study only considered the benefit of ASC on seed savings and not the advantages of savings gained using guidance technology. Using guidance technology with ASC could increase overall seed savings to between 3 percent and 35 percent on a per field basis. These savings depend on field size and shape with higher benefits occurring in large, irregular-shaped fields or fields containing conservation management structures, such as grass waterways and terraces.

Automatic section control on planters can also improve yield and reduce harvest loss. A two-year study at Auburn University, with results reported in this publication, indicated that ASC on planters can increase both cotton and corn yield while also reducing harvest loss

compared to double-planted areas. This study investigated double-planted areas at different angles (30 degrees, 60 degrees, and 90 degrees) versus single-pass areas. Population and yield data were collected for both crops with only harvest loss measured in corn when using a combine. Yield results indicated a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) between single-pass and double-pass areas for both cotton and corn. The average yield loss across all double-planted treatments was 21 percent in cotton and 17 percent in corn. In terms of harvest loss, there was an average 8.7x loss factor in double-planted areas for corn so a 1 bu/ac nominal combine loss would be 8.7 bu/ac ( $8.7 \times 1$  bu/ac). The 60-degree angle had the highest loss factor of 10.6x. A couple of observations were made over this two-year study in corn. Smaller ears were found in double-planted areas (figure 3), while the corn header tended to push

corn stalks down in these areas generating the higher harvest losses. Additionally in 2011, higher in aflatoxin levels were observed in double-pass areas.

### In summary, ASC can provide several benefits:

- Reduced overlap areas leading to cost savings on seed (as discussed above)
- Improved overall planter efficiency
- Improved environmental stewardship
- Increased operator visibility during harvest (able to see rows clearly) leading to increased field efficiency (especially at night)
- Reduced operator fatigue by not having to manually turn the planter ON or OFF over a full day.
- As-planted maps for field documentation, record keeping, and use in farm management information systems (FMIS) or other ag data management services

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### ASC DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS

Two online tools can be used to help evaluate the potential value of ASC and help with purchase decisions. The first is the PrecisionAg Institute's Profit Calculator available at [www.precisionag.com/profit-calculator/](http://www.precisionag.com/profit-calculator/). This calculator focuses on the value of guidance and ASC taking into account attributes such as field shape and size along with financial costs. Instructions, both written and video, are provided to help step through the setup for various field equipment (e.g., sprayer, planter, and fertilizer). Outputs include return on investment (ROI) for both guidance and ASC, providing expected payback time period.

The second tool was developed by the University of Tennessee and focuses directly on ASC technology for planters. This interactive computerized decision aid is called the Automatic Section Control for Planters Cost Calculator (ASCCC). A downloaded Excel file allows you to customize the setup for your particular farm, including specifying input costs, crop prices, and yield. You can download and review information at <http://economics.ag.utk.edu/asccc.html>. Outputs from this tool include seed savings, yield benefit, and payback time in years.

### APPROACH

ASC can be implemented using one of two different approaches: map-based or driving the field boundary. The map-based approach includes using a predefined field boundary map that is preloaded into the display to perform ASC. The map defines the planting area for the field. Based on the field boundary, ASC will automatically turn ON sections/rows in the planting areas and OFF in the no-planting area or previously planted areas. The benefit of this approach is that the boundary defines the area to plant

and is shown visually on the display, requiring no guesswork by the tractor operator. The downside is that a spatially accurate boundary file compatible with the ASC technology is needed before planting.

The second approach requires the tractor operator to plant the field border and around any no-plant areas (e.g., grassed waterways, obstacles, etc.) to set up the field extents. This step usually takes place when opening the field. This option has two main benefits. First, a previously created field boundary is not required allowing the tractor operator to establish what the crop-able area will be for the field. Second, issues between the boundary file format and possibly spatial information (e.g., datum and projection) when loading into the display are not a concern. Displays can require a specific boundary file format for uploading. If differences between the display and file exist, a conversion likely will be required through a farm management information system or specialized geographic information system (GIS) software. Most ASC technology provides this simple approach as the main option.

### FUNCTIONALITY

The turning ON and OFF of row units can be accomplished with either a clutch or drive motor. Clutches can be either used on individual row units that are mounted between the main drive shaft and row-unit drive (figure 4a and figure 5) or a clutch that engages and disengages the main hex planter drive shaft. Drive motors can also be used to turn row units ON and OFF (figure 4b). This approach can be accomplished through either motors driving individual row units or a hydraulic/electric drive controlling the hex planter shaft (figure 4b). The most popular approach is using row clutches, but the availability of individual meter motors is

increasing and provides both rate control and ON/OFF capabilities. Figure 4c shows an example of Raven's OmniRow, a hydraulic drive solution with capability of driving an individual meter independently of others on the planter. Figure 5 illustrates additional close-up examples of different clutches and direct meter drive technology currently available. Table 1 provides a partial list of companies and their ASC offerings.

Beyond drives or clutches, additional components include the proper display with appropriate software capable of automatic section control (figure 6). The correct wiring harness, electronic control unit (ECU), and connections are required as well. For pneumatic actuated clutches, an air compressor and control unit with air valves will be required (figure 7). If retrofitting a planter with ASC, consult your dealer on the needed

components for your specific planter model. An important sensor required is the GPS/ GNSS receiver. The Alabama Precision Ag team recommends sub-decimeter level accuracy correction services such as Real-Time Kinematic (RTK), Trimble's new RTX technology (+/- 1.5 inch), John Deere's SF2, or OmniStar's HP for individual row or control or grouping rows into sections. For best results, especially for individual row setups, RTK is highly recommended to ensure consistent performance from your ASC technology.

#### SUMMARY

ASC technology has become a popular option on new row crop planters and as outlined in this publication can provide substantial seed savings and other benefits. The decision to incorporate ASC should be carefully evaluated to determine if it fits in with your operation. This publication presents

the value proposition it can provide along with two decision support tools that can be used to help appraise prior to purchase. While the technology can provide tremendous benefits, it requires a quality precision ag display that not only offers ASC capabilities but also supplies valuable feedback on planter performance and possible issues during operation. It is important to maintenance and service ASC, especially the components mounted on the planter. Long-term projections are that ASC will become a standard piece of precision ag technology outfitted on row crop planters.

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