

## **New Project to Assess the Economic Benefits and Costs of Soil Health Practices**

As the importance of soil health and erosion control in conservation policy are becoming more recognized, studies on the economic benefits of conservation practices are becoming more important. Farmers cite one of the biggest reasons why they don't adopt conservation practices is the lack of credible information about the economics of these practices. Purdue University has teamed with Farm Foundation in this Conservation Improvement Grant (CIG) funded by the USDA Natural Resource and Conservation Service. In this study we seek to gather information by conducting entire-field data on the economics of cover cropping systems. We are looking for willing farmers from Central and Northeastern Indiana to participate in the study by providing data from five of their farm fields both with and without cover crops.

This study differs from other studies conducted on cover crops because entire fields will be used, as opposed to strip trials. In addition, 8-year crop data will be taken, instead of single year data in other studies. This will provide more useful information on long-term effects of cover crops. While the data will only be strictly applicable to Central and Northeastern Indiana, the results of the study will be relevant to much of the Corn Belt. The methods used in this study are also usable in other regions as well. The study seeks to develop and utilize best practices for economic data collection and analysis, as well as collecting and distributing the benefits and costs of cover crops in improving soil health.

To be eligible to participate in this study, farming operations must be in one of 37 counties in Central or Northeastern Indiana. The counties included in the study are: Adams, Allen (western), Benton, Blackford, Boone, Carroll, Clinton, Decatur, DeKalb, Delaware, Fayette, Grant, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Henry, Howard, Huntington, Jay, Johnson, Madison, Marion, Miami, Montgomery, Morgan, Noble, Putnam, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Union, Wabash, Wayne, Wells, and Whitley.

In addition, only farms with corn-corn or corn-soybean rotations on the targeted fields will be accepted. Farmers must provide five years of historic data on the five fields used for the study. Data will also be supplied for the three years of project operation resulting in eight years of total data. Both cover crop and non-cover crop farms and fields are needed. In fact, we would like to end up with about one-third cover crop and two-thirds non-cover crop fields.

Farmers will be compensated for participating in the study at a rate of about \$1000/year. Also, soil health test results will be provided to participating farmers. All supplied and collected data will remain confidential, unless the farmer explicitly releases the data.

For more information or to sign up for the study, contact:

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