



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Farmer data needed to explore costs, economic benefits of cover crops

WEST LAFAYETTE, IN Nov. 21, 2017: As Indiana farmers wrap up the 2017 crop harvest, attention turns to the end of the year economic and agronomic tasks that begin the planning process for future crops. Researchers at Purdue University are seeking farmers who want to leverage the data from their operations to build tools that may aid future cropping decisions.

“With the year’s harvest data in hand it is time to analyze the performance by field, as well as the farm as a whole,” says Purdue University Economist Wally Tyner. “Farmers can leverage the value of that data in a study of the economic benefits and costs of cover cropping systems. Long-term, the information we glean from this study may well be used by many farmers as they make future cropping decisions.”

Through a Conservation Innovation Grant from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, Purdue University is working with Farm Foundation to develop a comprehensive dataset on the economics of cover cropping systems. The study is unique in that it uses entire field or farm data, rather than data from strip trials.

Farmer involvement is a key component of the study. “Farmers tell us that one of the biggest reasons why they don’t adopt conservation practices is the lack of credible information about the economics of these practices,” says Tyner, who is leading the study. “We are seeking farmers to help us gather the data needed so we can compare economics of systems with and without cover crops.”

Farmers are needed who currently use cover crops and those who do not.

- Farmers must have five years of historical data on their farms—either by field or by the farm as a whole. Additional data will be gathered over the three years of the study. All data will be confidential unless the farmer explicitly releases the data.
- Data on five fields from each farm is preferred, but participation is possible if data is available on fewer than five fields.
- If whole-farm data is submitted, the farm must be all cover crops or all non-cover crop.
- Farms or fields need to have corn-corn or corn-soybean rotations on the targeted fields.
- Participating farmers will be reimbursed for soil testing, as well as receive cash compensation for being part of the study.
- To participate, a farming operation must be in one of 37 Central or Northeast Indiana counties: 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,

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Putnam, Randolph, Rush, Shelby, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Union, Wabash, Wayne, Wells, and Whitley.

“The study is using data from a specific area, but the results of the study will be relevant to much of the Corn Belt,” Tyner explains. Best practices for data collection are also being developed for use in other regions in the future.

“Farmer involvement is critical to this study,” Tyner stresses. “Providing the data will require some time on the part of the farmers, but our hope is that their involvement will leverage the value of the data for their individual operation, as well as the industry overall.”

Producers interested in being part of the study should contact Tyner by e-mail, wtynr@purdue.edu, or phone, 765-494-0199, or 765-409-1132.

Farm Foundation/Purdue Cover Crop Study FAQs

Q: Can my fields be irrigated? A: Fields in the study cannot be irrigated because this will cause unneeded variance in the data.

Q: Does the type of cover crop used matter? A: No, you are free to use any type of cover crop that you want. All we ask is that you tell us what cover crops you are using each year.

Q: Do I need to have five years of continuous cover crop use for my cover crop fields? A: This would be the ideal scenario. However, if we are unable to find enough fields with five continuous years of data, fields with a shorter period of cover crop use may be possible.

Q: The county where my farm is located isn't one of the selected counties, but it is adjacent to one, and it has similar soils. Am I still eligible? A: Yes, you are welcome to participate.

Q: Does the size of my fields matter? A: We have no restrictions on field size.

Q: How do I need to document the yields for my fields? A: We only need to know the information about average yield that you are confident is correct. Since this is not a legal issue, yield data does not need to be presented using yield maps or weigh tickets.

Q: If I have a field that I am not currently growing cover crops on, but plan to in the future, can I grow cover crops on them during the study? A: You can enroll those fields as non-cover crop fields so long as you do not plan on starting cover crops on the field until year 3 of the project.

Q: Can I still participate if I don't have five fields that are eligible for the study? A: Yes, you can. However, you will receive compensation at a rate of \$200 per field.

Q: Can fields with manure applied be used in the study? A: Yes. It would need to be documented like chemical fertilizer.

Q: Can I participate if I do not have data by field but only for the farm or parts of the farm? A: Yes, starting this year we are accepting whole- or partial-farm data.

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Farm Foundation is an agricultural policy institute cultivating dynamic non-partisan collaboration to meet society's needs for food, fiber, feed and energy. Since 1933, we have connected leaders in farming, business, academia and government through proactive, rigorous debate and objective issue analysis.