



NRCS Soil Health Update

May, 2018

Sharing soil health marketing communications information and resources from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, other partners and the media.



Ohio Country Journal – Addressing the conundrum of planting into cover crops

Though the acreage of cover crops in Ohio has expanded dramatically in recent years due to their wide array of benefits, cover crop management presents annual conundrums about spring planting.

Should the cover crop be terminated prior to planting corn and soybeans or after? The standard answer for pretty much all things agricultural applies: it depends. [Read more.](#)



FEED,
NOURISH,
THRIVE.

Feed, Nourish, Thrive. – The Dollars and Cents of Soil Health: A Farmer's Perspective

Soil and money? Many times we often think of soil in simple terms overlooking its importance. However, soil is a valuable asset in crop production. Soil health is essential to crop production as the health of the soil directly impacts crop yield. Read [this excerpt](#) from the [USDA blog](#) to learn more about a farm manager's perspective of soil health.



Lancaster Farming – Predators & cover crops fight field critters

Controlling animal pests in a grain field often requires a combination of practices. In the case of slugs and voles, wild animals and cover crops are two of a farmer's best allies, said James Hoorman, a regional soil health specialist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Ohio and Michigan. [Read more.](#)

FarmWeekNow.com

AMERICAN Agriculturist.

environmental
LEADER

Farm Week Now – Cover crop termination tips for spring 2018

As spring 2018 slowly emerges, cover crop growers are thinking termination. Cover crop experts offer some tips. [Read more.](#)

American Agriculturalist – Got the success mindset for cover cropping?

From working with cover cropping farmers, Steve Groff has identified six mindsets that are common to successful cover croppers. Groff is a cover crop pioneer and innovator who farms on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. [Learn more.](#)

Environmental Leader – Wrangler shows economic benefits of sustainable cotton farming

Wrangler analyzed dozens of scientific studies to show that sustainable cotton farming techniques improve crop yields and reduce costs while slashing greenhouse gas emissions.

For the new report, called [“Seeding Soil’s Potential”](#), Wrangler’s soil health advisors reviewed more than 45 scientific papers and reviews from academic, government, and industry researchers, the company says. Expert input came from the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Nature Conservancy, and the Soil Health Institute. [Read more.](#)



Soil Science Society of America – Why do forest soils need to be managed?

Forest soils are an important natural resource in the United States. Almost one-third of U.S. soil is in forests. These include highly managed forest plantations, farm woodlots, national forests and parks, urban forests, and vast wilderness areas. All these different types of forests require healthy soils to thrive and to provide goods, like timber, and fuel. [Read more.](#)



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Farm Forum – No-till gardening? Soil health methods not just for farmers

When her husband pulled a muscle, putting him out of commission last spring, Crystal Runge was unsure how she would get her garden tilled in time for planting vegetables.

Runge, who has tended her backyard Brookings garden for 14 years, works as a geographic information specialist at the regional Natural Resources Conservation Service office. When she brought up her predicament to her agronomist co-worker and fellow gardener Eric Barsness, he had an obvious question: “You work for this agency and you haven’t no-tilled yet?” he asked her. [Read more.](#)

American Agriculturalist – Check out the livestock beneath your boots

It’s as important to feed the underground livestock on your farm as it is to feed the above-ground livestock on your farm.

[Here is a look through the microscope](#) at some of the species in the all-important “herd” roaming beneath your boots.

Morning Ag Clips – Online tool for crop & livestock farmers

A new decision-making tool that can help crop and livestock farmers assess the economics of cover crops in their operations is now available for free on Iowa State University’s Ag Decision Maker website.

The tool, “Economics of Cover Crops,” consists of three in-depth budgeting worksheets designed to help farmers analyze the costs and benefits of cover crops – and paths to profitability – in their row crop operations with or without the integration of livestock. [Read more.](#)

Indiana Prairie Farmer – Soil health, cover crops not just for big farms

With small acreage or a plot measured in square feet, it’s even more important to keep soil healthy and productive. Cover crops, no-till, mulching, nutrient management and pest management look a little different on a smaller scale, but they serve

the same purpose on all farm sizes. They improve soil health! [Read more.](#)



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The New York Times – Can dirt save the Earth?
Agriculture could pull carbon out of the air and into the soil — but it would mean a whole new way of thinking about how to tend the land. [Read more.](#)

Indiana Prairie Farmer – Videos: Got soil health?
Videos from the second [National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health](#) have been released. The meeting served as an opportunity to learn how cover crops are being used by innovative farmers across the country and gain important insights on improving soil health from producers, conservation leaders, and scientists. [Watch here.](#)



Corn + Soybean Digest – Science shows building soil aggregates pays
Natural Resources Conservation Service soil health specialist Doug Peterson travels across Iowa and Missouri talking to farmer groups about improving soil health. [Check out this gallery](#) where he compares Grundy soil from a tilled field and some from a no-till Grundy.

Organic Farming Research Foundation – Register now for free webinar series on soil health
Please join OFRF and eOrganic for a series of webinars focused on the topics covered in OFRF's new *Soil Health and Organic Farming* educational guides. This series is recommended for farmers, ranchers, extension agents, educators, agricultural professionals, and others interested in building soil health. [Register here.](#)



Walton Family Foundation – Farming for a future of healthy soil, clean water
In rural Indiana, Ray McCormick plants cover crops – and trees – to protect farms and rivers. [Read more.](#)



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – Earth day every day

On Earth Day we celebrate the farmers, ranchers and foresters who've arranged their lives and livelihoods to improve the environment for us all. Every single day, these environmental stewards demonstrate that agriculture can be productive and regenerative. [View our multimedia story here.](#)



Ohio's Country Journal – A look at soil health in the farm bill

In this feature, former USDA Soil Conservation Service Chief Bill Richards talks about the next farm bill and its implications for crop insurance and conservation. “What responsibility are we willing to accept in return for low-cost crop insurance? I think that is going to be one of the issues in the farm bill that will cause some discomfort in the countryside. I think we have the duty and moral responsibility to use the best conservation technology available to control erosion, improve soil and water quality and increase productivity in the production of food fiber and energy for the long term benefits of people all over the world.” [Read more.](#)

Ag Funder News – Six startups using technology to improve soil health

A rising chorus of investors and stakeholders, along with farmers, are beginning to spread the message that the health of the soil is just as important as the health of the plants growing in it. [Read more.](#)



Ag Web – Tips for reaping the benefits of no-till
Less fuel. Less fertilizer. Less time. Less weed pressure. More moisture retention. Improved soil structure. What's not to like? These are just some of the benefits of no-till, yet adoption has been slow and often abandoned according to experts. Understanding the latest definition of no-till and the reasons to stay with it offer potential benefits to your management plan and can affect your bottom line as well. [Read more.](#)

NPR – A grass-roots movement for healthy soil spreads among farmers



In American farm country, a grass-roots movement is spreading, a movement to keep more roots in the soil. (Not just grass roots, of course; roots of all kinds.) Its goal: Promoting healthy soil that's full of life. [Read more.](#)

No-Till Farmer – Mobile app now available for cover crop field guide

The [Midwest Cover Crops Council](#) (MCCC) has reformatted its popular field guide to create the Midwest Cover Crops Field Scout mobile app for cellphones and tablets. The app allows farmers, crop advisers and conservation professionals to access vital cover crop information from mobile devices. [Read more.](#)

Morning Ag Clips – An easier way to establish (and grow) cover crops

Establishing cover crops in corn and soybeans is not without its challenges in Minnesota. There is little growing season left after harvest and soil moisture and herbicide carryover can often limit the ability to get a good cover crop stand when interseeding mid-season. Even with the most advanced interseeding technologies, cover crop establishment success will be greater following short season crops. Wheat, barley, and oats make establishing cover crops much easier. There is plenty of growing season left following small grain harvest for reliable cover crop establishment. [Read more.](#)

Additional soil health marketing communications materials from the soil health communications team are in development, so stay tuned for further updates.

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