



NRCS Soil Health Update

July, 2017

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



No-Till Farmer – Ramp up diversity and profitability by adding wheat

In the 150 years that farming has taken place in the U.S., soils have been degraded quite a bit, says Dwayne Beck. “We’ve lost tremendous organic matter in our soils,” the director of the Dakota Lakes Research Farm says. “If we’re going to continue farming, we have to do a better job.” No-till practices play an important role in reversing the damage, but Beck says it’s really only the first step. [Read more](#). Also from **No-Till Farmer** – Another lesson in soil health. [Read more](#). And – Oklahoma soil scientist witnesses life lessons on soil health. [Read more](#).



Cronkite News – Diamondbacks’ Hoover sports own farm system, focuses on cattle, sustainability

For Diamondbacks relief pitcher J.J. Hoover, signing with the team in January marked the beginning of a new chapter. Off the field, another experience has given birth and is in the early stages for the hard-throwing right-hander. Owning a farm. “I want to try and be as self-sustaining as possible,” he said. [Read more](#).



USDA-NRCS – Soil health campaign unlocks prestigious 2017 Silver Anvil award

NRCS recently landed the [2017 Public Relations Society of America’s Silver Anvil Award](#) in the government, public service category for its “[Unlock the Secrets in the Soil](#)” campaign. The Silver Anvil is generally considered the most prestigious award in the public relations world. The on-going campaign, which was generated entirely by NRCS’ team of public affairs officers, visual information specialists and video production specialists, topped campaigns developed by the biggest names in the ad and P.R. business. To date, the [PSA](#) distribution campaign has generated more than \$8 million in TV ad value equivalent alone, and its out-of-home PSA ads have been featured on billboards, airports, and metro stations and buses in more than 20 metro markets.

Wallaces Farmer

Wallaces Farmer – Interseeding cover crops in corn

For the past couple of years, “interseeding” has become a buzzword among innovative farmers. For years, farmers have been using cover crops to protect soil from erosion and take up excess nitrates in spring and fall. But until recently, most farmers have either waited until after the cash crop is harvested to drill cover crops, or they’ve seeded them with an airplane into standing crops in late summer or early fall. [Read more.](#)

Press

WESTERN FarmPress

The Mapleton Press – Tips for managing cover crops this spring

As the number of Iowa farmers using cover crops continues to grow, it's important to help make sure these farmers have a successful experience. Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey recently shared a number of spring management tips for farmers new to growing cover crops. Northey also encouraged farmers that are using cover crops to share photos on Facebook and Twitter using the hashtag #FarmersCoverIowa. [Read more.](#)

Western Farm Press – Tips for managing weeds in your cover crop

A vineyard can benefit in many ways from a robust, intentionally-seeded cover crop... All cover crop plant species can be used to protect the soil surface from erosion and crusting, improve water infiltration and provide structure-building organic matter to the soil when mowed or cultivated. A cover crop of weeds could, potentially, do the same thing. That's led some growers to ask: "Does it really matter if the vineyard floor cover is resident vegetation – a polite term for weeds – or a seeded cover crop?" [Read more.](#)

Successful Farming

at AGRICULTURE.COM™

Successful Farming – Mimicking native prairie keys soils for the Jorgensen Land and Cattle Company

If you want to find the cornerstone of the 12,000 cropland acres no-tilled by the Jorgensen Land and Cattle Company, look no further than the farm's 7,000 acres of native grass pastures. "Those native prairie soils will teach you more about what Mother Nature does than any symposium, any soils professor, any university," says Bryan Jorgensen. [Read more.](#)



NRCS Soil Health webinar series

Soil health challenges of high-disturbance crops – July, 11, 2 p.m. EASTERN Time.

In this webinar, participants will learn how innovative producers implement the four core soil health principles and include livestock in their management systems when growing crops that require a lot of soil disturbance. [Click here](#) to learn more. **Note:** No advance registration is required and space is not limited, but participants should sign in 15 minutes early.

This webinar offers CEUs and will be recorded for future viewing. It is presented by the [USDA NRCS Soil Health Division](#). Contact [Hollie Kuykendall, Ph.D.](#), National Technology Specialist, for more information.



Ag Web – Maker of Frosted Flakes helping farmers improve soil health

Farmers and the Kellogg Company may have different backgrounds, but they all have the same goal: improving soil health. "We seek to understand what are the areas of opportunity, what are the needs, and they vary," said Diane Holdorf, Kellogg Company's Chief Sustainability Officer... Holdorf says from farmers to consumers, to even their own employees, the company cares how their key ingredients are grown. [Read more](#).

AgPro – The economics of soil health

Tom Buman writes: There are quantitative tests to determine soil health, there are qualitative tools to assess soil health, and there are predictive models to project changes in soil health. But after all the work, there is very little meaningful data to answer the most important question: does soil health improve farm economics? If soil health is so "everything," then why can't we speak unequivocally about the positive economics of soil health and get on with it? Unfortunately, like many things in agriculture, soil health is complicated. [Read more](#).

Indiana Prairie Farmer – May rains teach soil erosion, cover crop lessons

What did the wet part of May teach about soil erosion and cover crops? In areas that received up to 10 inches of rain during the first few days of May, the lesson was pretty obvious. Soil erosion can still be a problem in Indiana where conservation measures aren't practiced. [Read more](#).

OFRF – New educational guides now available

OFRF is excited to announce a new series of educational guides designed to help organic farmers and ranchers enhance the soil health and overall resilience of their operations. "These guides to practical organic soil health management will assist farmers in selecting the best practices for their particular circumstances, while leading the way toward more sustainable agricultural systems," said Diana Jenkins, Research Program Director at OFRF. [Read more](#).

No-Till Farmer – Soil health focus leads to evolving no-till system

Doug Rogers believes the toughest challenge growers have to overcome to make no-till a success lies not out in the field, but

AMERICAN Agriculturist.



CountryGuide

STRATEGIC. BUSINESS. THINKING.

News Deeply

between the ears. "To switch your mindset is tough," he admits. But Rogers has never shied away from learning from others and trying new practices on his farm. [Read more](#).

American Agriculturalist – Cover crops rise to your weed control rescue

Twenty years ago, you could tell a Roundup Ready soybean field by how weed-free it was — not a weed in sight! Fast-forward 15 years: Fields infested with marestail weeds were most likely Roundup Ready soybeans. Today, other chemistries and combinations can fend off herbicide resistance, but the simple glyphosate-only program is rapidly becoming a distant memory. And another better control strategy arrives. [Read more](#).

Beef – Increase stock density to improve land faster

Graziers who have tried both ultra-high stock densities and a slower form of "rotational" grazing say increased stock density seems to build the land faster. The only two scientific experiments on the topic suggest this is true. [Read more](#).

Country Guide (CA) – Get more from cover crops

As summer arrives, Country Guide put together a grower panel on cover crops, featuring four producers from across Eastern Canada. Each is from a different region, with specific rotations, farming operations and level of experience working with cover crops. Yet all are united in their belief that covers provide a unique benefit to their crop performance and overall soil health. [Read more](#).

News Deeply – To fight drought, Kenyan women farmers adopt conservation agriculture

About three years ago, when 49-year-old Margaret Gaceke started leaving crop residue in her fields following harvests, people in her village were horrified at what they saw as laziness. "Traditionally, everyone cleaned the farms by burning crop and weed residues or any other types of vegetation [left over] after harvesting," explains Gaceke, who lives in Central Imenti, in eastern Kenya's Meru County. But the mother of two says she started leaving the residue in place after taking a class on conservation agriculture provided by the local Kaguma Farmers self-help group. [Read more](#).

Additional soil health marketing communications materials from the soil health communications team are in development, so stay tuned for further updates. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you need additional information or would like to offer contributions to the Update. Thanks for all you do on behalf of conservation and American agriculture.



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