Learning From On-Farm Research: PFI’s Cooperators’ Program

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MISSION:
Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.
Cooperators’ Program

• **Since 1987...**

  – PFI’s vehicle for conducting on-farm research on the issues and concerns deemed most important by our members.

  – Goal: Make sure practical and farmer-directed on-farm research is conducted and shared with other farmers in Iowa, the Midwest and beyond.
Since 1987...

230 COOPERATORS have conducted...

1,359 ON-FARM TRIALS
Cooperators’ Meeting

• Annual, 2-day meeting in December.
• By invitation only.
• Very much a *working* meeting for those attending.
  1. Reporting
  2. Knowledge gaps & Project ideas
  3. Project design
1. Farmer-researchers present on past year's findings.
2. Identify knowledge gaps & new projects
3. Project design

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*Note: The image depicts a table with columns labeled 'Cover' and 'No Cover' for Reps 1 through 4. The table is designed to illustrate different project design scenarios.*
4. Implement new trials on-farm
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5 (1. again). Farmer-researchers present on past year’s findings.
In 2017...

51 COOPERATORS took part in...

71 ON-FARM TRIALS
Can rolling covers provide better weed control and reduce costs in my soybeans?
This trial encouraged us to experiment with varieties we hadn’t used before, and we had success. These varieties filled a void in our CSA and market offerings.
“Why are bobolinks coming to my 300 acres where there are 10,000 acres in a wildlife conservation area a quarter mile away?”
Underseeded vs. Mid-Summer-Seeded Green Manure Cover Crops—
Vic Madsen, Doug Alert, Margaret Smith

Which will provide more N to the succeeding corn crop?
“When cattle are out grazing covers, we don’t have to feed cows, which can save us money.”
This project helped me think through how I want to use the sheep on my vegetable fields and what will be most feasible.
Research Reports

Read and download reports of novel on-farm research projects designed and led by farmers in field crops, horticulture, livestock, energy and more.

Reports encompass a range of topics in field crops, grazing and livestock, horticulture, on-farm energy and local food. Data from Cooperators' Program projects is analyzed by Practical Farmers staff trained in agronomic research methods. Research reports are written by Practical Farmers staff to ensure consistency and quality, and are available for free in hard copy or online.

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<td>Cereal Rye Cover Crop Termination Date Ahead of ...</td>
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http://practicalfarmers.org ➔ On-Farm Research ➔ Research Reports
On-farm researchers...

- Are curious about observations made on the farm
- Have questions about production practices
- Set project designs and parameters
- Collect and record data
- Share findings with other farmers
- **Generate new questions & experiments!**
How to get involved...

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