SMALL GRAINS in the CORN BELT
WORKING TOGETHER, AMERICA’S MAJOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES CAN SUSTAIN THEIR CUSTOMERS

IOWA’S CURRENT CROPS

13.5 MILLION ACRES CORN
9.8 MILLION ACRES SOYBEANS

IOWA’S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: HOW TO GET THERE

☐ A MILLION ACRES OF SMALL GRAINS
☐ COVER CROPS
☐ REDUCED TILLAGE
☐ FERTILIZER OPTIMIZATION

PRINCIPAL FARMERS
working together, always learning
SMALL GRAINS, LARGE GAINS
HOW SMALL GRAINS CAN HELP COMPANIES MEET CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT GOALS

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION
MANUFACTURING NITROGEN FERTILIZER IS VERY ENERGY INTENSIVE. CORN GROWN AFTER SMALL GRAINS + GREEN MANURE CROPS REQUIRES 88% LESS MANUFACTURED FERTILIZER.

PESTICIDE USE REDUCTION
DIVERSE ROTATIONS CAN CONTROL WEEDS EFFECTIVELY WITH UP TO 6 TIMES LESS HERBICIDE USE.

COMPETITIVE FARM PROFITS
REDUCING INPUT COSTS RETURNS MORE TO THE BOTTOMLINE.

PROFIT 2006 - 2015
2-YEAR ROTATIONS $357/ACRE
3-YEAR ROTATIONS $371/ACRE

“INCORPORATING MORE LEGUMES INTO MY ROTATION LETS ME CUT BACK ON NITROGEN FERTILIZER RATES.”
- TIM SIEREN, PFI MEMBER

IMPROVED WATER QUALITY
SMALL GRAINS AND GREEN MANURE CROPS KEEP ROOTS IN THE GROUND YEAR-ROUND AND NITRATES OUT OF THE WATER FOR MORE MONTHS.

3-YEAR ROTATIONS:
GROUND COVERED 61% OF TIME

2-YEAR ROTATIONS:
GROUND COVERED 42% OF TIME

DATA COURTESY DR. MATT LIEBMAN, 2016.
AGENDA

• Pilot Overview
• Production Results
• Cool Farm Tool Results
• Key Findings: Constraints and Opportunities
• Looking Ahead: Small Grains in 2017
• Discussion
Farmers grew oats and PFI coordinated efforts to increase oat production knowledge.

The Sustainable Food Lab coordinated actors across the value chain to support market connectivity.

Value chain actors advised farmers and partners on opportunities to expand the market for oats.

 Farmers used the Cool Farm Tool to translate farm management practices into GHG benefits.
Pilot Overview
- 7 Farmers
- 240 Acres
- 21,649 bushels
- 385.61 Tons
# Production Results

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<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Yield (bu/acre)</th>
<th>Test Weight (lbs/bu)</th>
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<td>G</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240.3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>92.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
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</table>
Overview of Farm Management Practices

- Reduced tillage
- Fertilizer applied (avg. 40 lbs/acre)
- No herbicide used
- Limited disease/pest pressure
- Baled oat straw
- Planted oats with a green manure cover crop
- Rotation: soy – oat – corn
Cool Farm Tool Results

Oat GHG / ton

Average per ton: -429
Average per acre: -613
Key Findings

FARMERS
• All farmers will plant oats again next year
• Timing of planting and harvest, and post-harvest handling were biggest challenges
• A few farmers sold to the local feed market, most are still marketing oats
• Whole farm enterprise budgets are needed to support rotation economics

MARKETS
• Feed market represents the largest potential demand, a commodity livestock chain feed ration is the hard to change when farmers don’t have choice
• Food grade is possible in the Midwest
• Sustainability benefits are available for rotationally raised corn and soybeans

POLICY
• Third crop eligibility for cost share would provide additional incentives while market builds
• NRCS training on third crop benefits needed in order to better support farmers

CONSERVATION BENEFITS
• Early results with the CFT are good, but need full rotation data to establish baseline
• More on-farm and university trials with water quality and SOM measurement are needed to support CFT findings
Looking Ahead: 2017 Pilot

Farmers learning from farmers
- PFI Farmer Support Model
- Annual PFI Small Grain Conference
- Rotation Research Network

Incentives
- Cost Share
- Enterprise Budgets that show reduced inputs in corn and soy year + increased yields

Market Stability
- Small Grains Feed Analysis
- Sustainability metrics using CFT and testing FPC, RSET
- Collaboration from companies with interest in full rotation
- Tools for companies to communicate about the benefits of small grains
- Iowa Learning Journey for supply chain actors

Rotationally raised Corn and Soy Supply Chain Pilots
- Reductions in inputs and resilient corn and soy yields
- Reductions in GHGs in livestock feed chains
- Reductions in GHGs in soy-oat-corn food ingredients
- Improved soil health and decreased nitrates and phosphorous in waterways
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