
Practical Cover Cropper - Cost benefits of cover crops + Enroll in our N Rate Risk Protection Program

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April 2025

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Exploring the cost benefits of cover crops

Kyle Nilsestuen, a farmer from Arcadia, Wisconsin, has been planting cover crops for nearly 10 years. He has been no-till since the late 90's because of the rolling hill topography of his land. He recently extended his typical corn and soy rotations by adding a third crop of winter wheat. He spoke at PFI's Midwest

Covers and Grains Conference in March about the cost benefits of cover crops, sharing his data from the past two years.

After Kyle harvests his early summer wheat, he plants a clover mix. The clover is used to graze cattle and is later baled for feed. The vetch and clover in the mix will continue growing, overwintering and preventing erosion. With the value of the wheat and straw sold, savings on cattle feed, and the following corn or soybean yields, he averaged a net profit of \$1,020 per acre per year.

When considering the profitability of cover crops, it is important to assess the often hidden benefits. Kyle did research on soil erosion across Wisconsin, and he found numbers for tonnage lost anywhere from 0.8 to six tons per acre. He estimated that two to four tons of soil erodes per acre each year, which is roughly the thickness of a piece of paper spread across the entire acre.

Cover crops have been found to prevent anywhere from 31% to 100% soil erosion depending on what cover crops you plant and other management practices. By Kyle's estimation, cover crops could save him as much as \$200 per acre every year by keeping his soil in place.

For Kyle, getting multiple uses from cover crops adds up to money saved and soil saved, which is a win-win situation.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2024 annual report is live



As we reflect on our work and growth last year, we celebrate the accomplishments of our farmers, staff and supporters.

Our 2024 annual report, now available **online**, shows what we did together – and how these groups are the heart of our work equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

[View the report.](#)

Apply by April 30: N Rate Risk Protection Program



Looking to save inputs on your corn crop?

As you gear up for planting corn, our **N Rate Risk Protection Program** can offer support from a PFI agronomist on reducing your nitrogen rate and protecting your bottom line. It also offers a risk protection payment of \$35 per acre if your yield drops after reducing your typical rate.

Sign up today.

Share ideas for the 2025 Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day



PFI is excited to partner with The Land Connection and Glacial Drift Enterprises to bring the **Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day** to Ames, Iowa, on Aug. 20, 2025. This regional event includes education and field demonstrations featuring mechanical weed control equipment for vegetable and field crop production.

Planning is underway, and we invite your input. What equipment, demos, speakers or topics would you like to see? **Share your ideas.**

IN THE FIELD

Research: "In-Row Roll-Crimping Cereal Rye Cover Crop Seeded in Twin-Rows Ahead of Soybeans"



During his 2023 research trial, farmer **Michael Vittetoe** of Washington, Iowa, assessed how in-row roll-crimping of a cereal rye cover crop at the boot stage affected soybean yield.

Michael also compared this practice to chemically terminating the rye cover crop just after boot stage and leaving it standing.

[Read the full research report.](#)

Research: "Roll-Crimping Cover Crops and Soybean Seeding Date"



Take a look back at **Tim Sieren's** research from 2017, where he compared soybean seeding dates relative to cover crop termination.

He looked at cover crop termination before and after seeding soybeans, as well as comparing the termination techniques of chemical versus roller-crimping.

[Read about Tim's findings.](#)

Blog: "Eight Planter Adjustments for Planting into Cover Crop Residue"



In this blog from 2018, **Wayne Fredericks** shares his "spring cover crop management playbook."

Cover crop termination and cash crop planting in the spring is the most important aspect of cover crop management to ensure good yields.

[Read the blog.](#)

Additional resources

- Ohio State University Extension Research: **["Cold Front Planting Timing-Corn"](#)**
- Ohio State University Extension Research: **["Cold Front Planting Timing-Soybeans"](#)**
- PFI Blog: **["Jason Russell's Four Planting Green and Planter Set-Up Tips for #plant23"](#)**
- Pennsylvania State Research Summary: **["Planting Green 101"](#)**
- PFI Webinar: **["Exploring Creative Residue Management and Soil Amendments in a Four Crop Rotation"](#)**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed are in Central time.

**April 11: Shared Learning Call –
[Preventing and Managing Disease
in Oats](#)**

Noon-1 p.m. | **[Online](#)**

Friends of PFI events

**April 9: Webinar –
Why Cover Crops?**

Hosted by: Green Cover
Noon-1 p.m. | **Online**

**April 17: Webinar – North Central
U.S. Climate and Drought
Summary and Outlook Webinar:**
April 2025

*Hosted by: National Integrated
Drought Information System*
1-2 p.m. | **Online**

View our events calendar

Contact our team

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Chat with our cover crops team by calling the PFI office at (515)-232-5661.

Donate today

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