Trends with Cover Crops Across the Corn Belt

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Presentation Outline

- Trends on cover crop acreage, use, and impact on corn and soybean yields
  - Results from SARE/CTIC farmer survey
- New approaches with equipment and establishment of cover crops

SARE/CTIC Cover Crop Survey

- 759 - producers that responded to the survey
  - In total, the farmers surveyed planted over 218,000 acres of cover crops in 2012
- Surveys were distributed online nationally and at Midwest farmer meetings / conferences in winter of 2012-13
  - National No-Till Conference – Indianapolis, IN January 2013
  - Conservation Tillage and Technology Conference, Ada, OH March 2013
  - Soil and Water Conservation Society Cover Crops meetings
    - Decatur, IL – January 2013
    - Altoona, IA – December 2012
    - No-Till on the Plains – Salina, KS November 2012

Average Cover Crop Acres per Respondent

Desired Cover Crop Benefits – USDA Farmer Survey

- Desired Cover Crop Benefits (% of Respondents)
Cover Crops Used

Impact of Cover Crops on Corn and Soybean Yields*

Drought States Commodity Crop Yields as Impacted by Cover Crops in 2012

- Broke the data down to look at yield impact in seven of the states hit hardest by drought (specifically NE, KS, SD, MO, IA, IL, and IN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of respondents</th>
<th>Corn</th>
<th>Soybeans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All respondents with side-by-side field comparisons</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drought states (? states)</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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*Yields are for area on farms where farmers had side by side fields with similar management and varieties, either using cover crops or not

2012 Corn Yields by State

Drilling cereal rye after corn in Iowa
High clearance cover crop broadcast seeder

Von Tillburg farm (Ohio)
60 foot wide roller crimper for terminating cover crops (this is hairy vetch in Illinois)
Concluding Thoughts

- There are significant new business opportunities with cover crops, for ag retailers, equipment manufacturers, seed companies, crop advisors, and many others.
- Using cover crops is not simply planting them and terminating them. Most experienced cover crop users will say they have made other changes in their farming system as a result of adopting cover crops.
- Bottomline – it’s going to take a wide-ranging embrace of cover crops by the ag industry for cover crops to truly take hold across the Corn Belt, but the potential benefits for conservation, water quality, and soil health are huge.

Thanks! Visit www.sare.org/covercrops