

Take a Look at Cover Crops

FAIRMONT, Minn. (01/10/2012) – If there was a way to lower fertilizer and herbicide costs, allow for better water infiltration into the soil, and prevent soil erosion, wouldn't you want to try it? Give cover crops a chance and see what they can do for you.

If properly managed, cover crops can bring multiple benefits to a farm. Cover crops can either take-up excess water or help conserve water. They can either take-up excess nutrients in the soil or make nutrients more available. Cover crops are excellent for erosion prevention, weed prevention, increasing soil microbe diversity, decreasing compaction, acting as an alternative forage crop, and much more. Depending on management and specie selection, cover crops can help alleviate almost any issue of concern in your field.

If you are leery of trying cover crops for the first time, think about taking part in a cost-share program such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Stop by your local NRCS and SWCD offices for more information. Your local watershed organization may also have some funds available. Rural Advantage in Fairmont, Minnesota, currently has some cost-share funds as well.

If cost-share does not interest you, try a couple different cover crops on your farm. Minimal space would be needed for a few plots of species you are interested in. Establishment is easiest after canning crops, small grains, or silage when drilling or broadcasting can be utilized and time is not so tight. However, more and more growers in the Midwest are over-seeding into standing row crops such as corn or soybeans via high-clearance equipment or aerial application with the use of either a helicopter or airplane.

For questions or more information regarding cover crops, contact:
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