

Cover Crops to Open the 2012 Third Crop Producer Meetings

FAIRMONT, Minn. (01/23/2012) – Join University of Minnesota Extension and Rural Advantage for the 8th annual Third Crop Producer Meetings. “Cover Crops Research and Experiences” will kick-off the 2012 series and will be held at the Knights of Columbus in Fairmont, Minnesota on February 6th. Registration begins at 9:30am. The morning session will be from 10:00am - 12:00pm and the afternoon session will be from 1:00pm - 3:00pm.

“Cover Crops Research and Experiences” will begin with a presentation on the Minnesota Cover Crops Decision Tool. This web-based tool is meant to be used by farmers and other ag professionals to choose cover crop species that will fit into their operation and geographical placement in Minnesota. Jill Sackett, University of Minnesota Extension Educator, was part of the planning committee and will be explaining how to use the Decision Tool.

The remainder of the morning will be led by researchers from the University of Minnesota. Miriam Gieske will be sharing the research she has been conducting around the popular tillage radish. She has been using her research plots to learn more about the agronomics and chemical make-up of this member of the Brassica family. Adam Herges will then discuss the research he has been doing in southeast Minnesota on winter rye as a cover crop. Herges is specifically looking to see if winter rye can reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that are getting into surface waters. Both research projects have been obtaining useful information for Minnesota farmers.

The afternoon session will open with Dr. Michael Lehman with the USDA-ARS out of Brookings, South Dakota. Dr. Lehman and colleagues have been looking at different aspects of cover crop use in our area of the Midwest. He will specifically be discussing how the use of cover crops affects the make-up of the soil, both from a nutrient and microbial point of view.

Minnesota farmer Carmen Fernholz has been using cover crops for a number of years. He has recently begun working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to see if the use of cover crops and alfalfa mulch positively affect nitrogen levels in the soil. The idea is to be able to grow your own nitrogen fertilizer on your farm.

To end the day, a Grower Panel has been put together. It consists of farmers from southern Minnesota who have been using cover crops in their rotation. Audience members will have the chance to ask the farmers questions about cover crops in order to gain useful tips and techniques for using them in their own fields or gardens. The panel will include: Carmen Fernholz, an organic grain producer from Madison; Bill Yock, a beef and grain producer from St. James; Ray Yokiel, an organic producer and pilot from Wells; and Jerry Ackermann, a grain and alfalfa producer from Lakefield.

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