



**2016 Empire Farm Days: August 9-11**  
**Rodman Lott and Son Farms, Seneca Falls, NY**  
**Show Manager Melanie Wickham**  
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Photo: Jim Hershey interseeding crops at his Elizabethtown, PA, farm. Hershey, president of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance, is part of the Empire Farm Days Soil Health Center farmer panel on Tuesday, August 9, 2016. Photo: courtesy of Jim Hershey

**PRESS RELEASE: July 27, 2016**

### **Farmers Participating on Soil Health Center Panels at 2016 Empire Farm Days**

Seneca Falls, NY. The New York State Working Group for Improved Soil Health has named its farmer-panelists for three Soil Health Center panel discussions at the August 9, 10, and 11 Empire Farm Days at Rodman Lott and Son Farms in Seneca Falls, NY.

**The Tuesday, August 9 panel at 11:30 am will address Interseeding and Cover Crops.** USDA-NRCS Northeast Soil Health Specialist Paul Salon will moderate the panel that includes:

Jim Hershey, Hershey Farms, Elizabethtown, PA  
Mike Northrup, Northrup Dairy, Jefferson County, NY  
Rod Porter, organic crop farm, Trumansburg, NY.

**Jim Hershey** owns and operates a 600-acre livestock and grain farm and has been practicing no-till for more than 25 years. He has been cover cropping for 15 years, and in the past two years has begun incorporating multi-species into his operation in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. He has built two interseeders, one of which has planted

several thousand acres in New York state; the other was sold to the Scott County Conservation District of Minnesota. He has installed a ZRX roller on his cornplanter to be able to roll and plant into green cover. Jim is the President of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance.

**Mike Northrup** owns and operates a 100-cow dairy in Jefferson County. Last year he cropped 166 acres of corn grain, 88 acres of corn silage, 70 acres of wheat, and 70 acres of alfalfa. After a number of years of using no-till and cover crops, in 2015 he went 100 percent to that system. Mike bought an Interseeder Technologies seeder and interseeded more than 100 acres of red clover, annual ryegrass and radish into his corn this year. He will be participating in a fall 2016 on-farm workshop to discuss results with neighboring farmers.

**Rod Porter** owns and operates a 450-acre organic crop farm and has interseeded multi-species cover crops in corn and soybeans for five years. He has used various species and methods, including an interseeder drill the last two years. Rod has a Plant Science degree from Cornell University. As the regional representative in New York state for King's AgriSeeds, he works with many seed dealers and producers to teach and promote the use of cover crops, high quality forage varieties and sustainable crop rotations.

This panel follows a 9:30 am presentation on Cover Crop Interseeding into Corn and Soybean with Dr. Matthew Ryan, Agroecologist and Sustainable Cropping Systems Specialist at Cornell University, and a 10:30 am Interseeder and cover crops field demonstration planted by Seedway and King's AgriSeeds.

**The Wednesday, August 10 panel at 11:30 am will address Managing Reduced Tillage and Cover Crops.** Cornell SCNY Dairy and Field Crops Team Leader Janice Degni will moderate the panel that includes:

Donn E. Branton, Branton Farms, LeRoy, NY  
Jeff Toussaint, Toussaint Farms, Medina, NY  
Norman Vaill, Vaill Acres Farms, Aurora, NY.

**Donn E. Branton** and his son Chad farm 1,500 acres of field crops and vegetables. A 3-acre trial convinced Donn to transition the entire farm to reduced tillage. He works four major soil types and a variety of textures, and has tested different types of equipment and cover crops for best results. He counts fuel, labor, time and equipment wear savings as advantages of reduced till systems.

**Jeff Toussaint** runs a diversified crop farm, growing fruit and grain crops. He has been no-till planting for many years as well as conducting extensive experimenting with cover crops over the past 10 years. He has tried several different mixes of cover crops and used interseeding when the conditions were right.

**Norman Vaill** farms 230 acres of cash crops utilizing ridge tillage on Honeoye and Lima soils in the Cayuga Lake Watershed. He has implemented aerial-applied cover crops for many years in both corn and soy row crops and has been working on cover crop logistics and test plots with Cornell for a number of years. The last few years he has started using interseeded rye grass and radish in his corn and is currently pursuing interseeded a cover crop into his soybeans.

This panel follows a 9:30 am presentation on Soil Biology and Its Impact on Soil Health and Crop Production with Dr. Janice E. Thies of Cornell University and a 10:30 am Cover crops field demonstration planted by Seedway and King's AgriSeeds. The New York Farm Viability Institute is sponsoring a 1:30 pm Precision Ag Seminar at the Soil Health Center.

**The Thursday, August 11 panel at 11:30 am will address Winter Grain Cover Crops for Forage.** Cornell PRO-DAIRY Dairy Forage Systems Specialist Joe Lawrence will moderate the panel that includes:

Gabriel Carpenter, Wideawake Farm, Dryden, Central NY  
Aaron Pierce, Royal-J-Acres, Madrid, Northern NY  
Vaughn Sherman, Jerry Dell Farm, Dryden, Central NY  
Ken Van Slyck, Van Slyck's Dairy Farm, Pike, Western NY.

**Gabriel Carpenter** crops 500 acres and custom raises heifers and registered Holsteins for breeding with his brother Jason. They have double cropped triticale for silage for the past four years. Gabriel also works as a dairy nutritionist and dairy sales manager for Keystone Mills.

**Aaron Pierce** is part of the Royal-J-Acres dairy family with 3,500 acres and more than 1,800 cows. Fresh cows are milked four times a day, the rest of herd twice a day, pushing the herd average to 79 lbs. of milk per cow per day. In 2012, winter rye was planted after the fall corn harvest. In 2014, they planted triticale. In spring 2016, they harvested 1100 acres of winter forage. They are now experimenting with interseeding winter rye into standing corn.

**Vaughn Sherman** of Jerry Dell Farm, Inc. runs a certified organic dairy operation cropping more than 2,500 acres. He utilizes cover crops and triticale in his forage system.

**Ken Van Slyck** manages Van Slyck's Dairy Farm, a 7<sup>th</sup> generation dairy with 1200 mature cows and 1100 young stock, with his cousin Tammy Andrews, their fathers, and 23 employees. All their crop ground is dedicated to fulfilling the forage needs of the dairy animals along with some high moisture corn. Cover cropping has been a standard practice here for 15 years, including double cropping triticale and corn silage with yields as high as 32 tons per acre.

This panel follows a 9:30 am presentation on Utilizing Winter Grain Cover Crops for Forage with Joe Lawrence and a 10:30 am Cover crops field demonstration planted by Seedway and King's AgriSeeds.

Lunch sponsored by King's AgriSeeds follows each panel at 12:30pm at the Soil Health Center building, established in 2015 as a permanent site for soil health programming at the annual event that is the largest outdoor agricultural trade show in the northeastern U.S. Soil scientists at the Center will have tabletop demonstrations illustrating how different management practices, such as no-till, conventional and cover cropping, impact soil-water interaction.

The Soil Health Seminar Center is a cooperative effort of the New York State Working Group for Improved Soil Health comprised of USDA-NRCS, conservation districts, state government agencies, educational institutions, the Cornell University Soil Health program, cooperative extension, non-governmental organizations, farmers, private

consultants, and agribusinesses working towards developing innovative solutions to improve soil health and raising awareness of soil health concepts by producers and ag service providers. For more information, contact Paul Salon, Northeast Soil Health Specialist, USDA-NRCS, 607-562-8404 ext 103, [paul.salon@ny.usda.gov](mailto:paul.salon@ny.usda.gov).

Experience Empire is the theme of the 2016 Empire Farm Days with 300 acres of exhibits, seminars, programs, demonstrations, live animals, and test driving opportunities. Show hours are 9 am to 5 pm on Tuesday, August 9 and Wednesday, August 10; 9 am to 4 pm on Thursday, August 11. Parking is \$10 per vehicle. Daily schedules and more information, visit [empirefarmdays.com](http://empirefarmdays.com) or call 877-697-7837.

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