

May 2017

2016-2017 Cover Crop Survey



Every year, USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE), the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), and the American Seed Trade Association, send a cover crop survey out to farmers around the country in order to learn and gauge how farmers and producers use cover crops in the fields and how their yields are affected. This survey also aims to gather data from farmers who do not incorporate cover crops into their crop rotation so that information on both cover crops and traditional farming can be collected and shared.

The CTIC website lists cover crop surveys dating back the inaugural one from 2012. These surveys provide a wealth of knowledge on how cover crops affect yields, how many farmers utilize cover crops and other valuable information. When the Cover Crop Survey began in 2012-2013, there were 759 farmer participants from 36 states. Across the 36 states, over 218,000 acres of cover crops were planted with farmers estimating that they planted an average of 303 acres of cover crops per farmer. Even with much of the United States recovering

from a drought, various organizations learned from this survey that farmers still implemented cover crops because they saw the benefits cover crops had on soil health and crop yield.

Each year, this survey continues to grow in both the number of farmer participants and acres logged. As of 2016, over 2,000 farmer participants completed the survey from 48 states (excluding Nevada and New Hampshire). Across the 48 states included in the survey, around 350,000 acres were implementing cover crops into management systems. An average of 298 acres were planted per farmer. Additional information collected has included tillage systems, rented vs. owned land, perceived benefits, and the impact of crop insurance premiums on cover crop choices.

The information gathered in the Cover Crop Surveys over the past four years has helped guide policy, promote agriculture, as well as further research and the development of technical support materials. Asking farmers—both those who use cover crops and traditional farmers—about the factors

that influence their adoption of cover crops is a vital part of the survey process.

Survey feedback will help organizations look for changes in management systems and help provide better, more current information to farmers and those who work in this field. Information from the survey, such as the types of seeds and what crops the cover crops are being planted into, helps the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) staff identify what topics to build trainings around, which in turn helps farmers learn what works on their land and what does not. By completing the survey, you are helping ICP staff create and implement trainings suited to the needs of farmers in areas where trainings on specific topics are needed.

Responses on the current survey will be accepted until around the mid-to-late May. From there, the numbers will be calculated for the report, with the report coming out around July. Results will be posted on CTIC's website. To complete the survey, visit www.tinyurl.com/2017coverssurvey



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