

# LET'S DO THE MATH:

## ECONOMIC, AGRONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF COVER CROPS

Cover crops are gaining ground across America, and many farmers swear by them for a wide range of reasons. Some are sold by the chance to increase yields, or build soil organic matter, or because they appreciate the chance to capture valuable crop nutrients in the root zone rather than losing them to leaching over the winter. However, despite the long-time use and growing popularity of cover crops, we don't have enough hard data on their benefits.

**CTIC AND PARTNERS** — including Corn & Soybean Digest magazine and the National Corn Growers Association, as well as funding partners Monsanto, Bayer CropScience, Syngenta, The Nature Conservancy, Purdue University, DuPont Pioneer, CropLife America, and Center Seeds— are quantifying the impacts of cover crops so farmers, advisors and policymakers can do the math on their benefits.

We'll be studying a wide range of contributions cover crops make to farms, including:

- **The economic pay-off of cover crops**
- **Nutrient cycling**
- **Pollinator habitat**
- **Improvements in soil health**
- **Forage opportunities**
- **and many others**

This project will extend to farms across Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and South Dakota. We'll be documenting costs, economic returns, decision-making processes, and the differences among economic and environmental factors in fields newly planted

to cover crops and those that have been host to cover crops in the past. In fact, the program will result in at least 1,000 new acres of cover crops—a great opportunity to study the economics, challenges and best practices surrounding their establishment.

This project will also examine methods for providing cost-effective pollinator habitat on the farm; both through adjusting cover crop management and by planting marginal cropland to perennial habitat. Partner beekeepers with honey bee colonies on five farm sites will help determine how to practically support pollinators on the farm without sacrificing profitability.

Over the next couple years, CTIC will share what we learn on our partner farms. Look for results through:

- **CTIC's website, [www.ctic.org](http://www.ctic.org)**
- **Corn & Soybean Digest**
- **Annual winter workshops**

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Photos courtesy of USDA NRCS, Paul Gross and CTIC

LEARN MORE. [www.ctic.org/CoverCropMath](http://www.ctic.org/CoverCropMath)

