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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

The Practical

COVER
CROPPER

May 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Adam Mayer farms near St. Ansgar, Iowa, where he typically cover crops 150 acres with cereal rye by aerial seeding into standing corn and drilling after soybeans. Adam became interested in cover crops for their potential to save him money on weed control.

It's all about biomass: Last spring, after seeing strong weed suppression from his cereal rye cover Adam eliminated his pre-plant herbicide pass on a soybean field that had previously had high waterhemp and giant ragweed pressure. He attributes good weed control to a few factors: a solid stand of rye, early season growth, no-till residue and later termination of the rye. He notes that



terminating the rye three weeks after planting achieves a canopy relay between the rye biomass and the soybeans canopying out.

The trade-off: "The cost savings from cutting the pre-plant pass probably would've been in the \$25/acre range," says Adam. Comparing the cost of the cover crop to the money he saved, he notes, "The savings got us most of the way there, on covering the cover crop seed cost and nearly there on the application cost."

Thinking ahead: With the cool weather slowing cover crop growth this spring, Adam will make the call in the next week, if he can skip this year's pre-plant pass. Considering next fall's cover crop, he advises, "the earlier the better" to get the stand and growth required to achieve good weed suppression the following spring.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Welcome Solveig Orngard to the PFI staff!



Solveig Orngard joins the PFI team as a field crops education coordinator.

In this role, she works with the farmer-led education department to engage field crop farmers and coordinate educational programs, both virtual and in the field.

Growing up in Boone County, Iowa, she developed a deep-rooted connection with the land that brought her back to her home state. [Read more about Solveig.](#)

Check out PFI's Find Cover Crops App

Looking for cover crop services but unsure where to begin?

Our **Find Cover Crops app and website can help** you easily locate cover crop seed, services and suppliers in your area.

Download the free app in the [App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#), or [click here to access it in your web browser](#).



Are you raising cover crop seed this year?



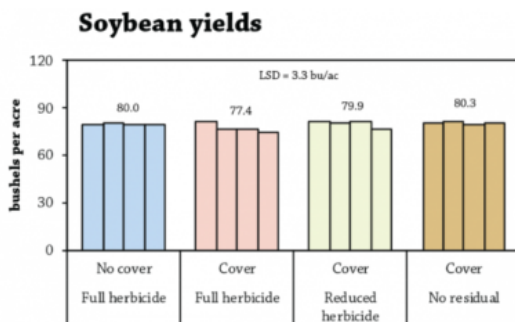
PFI offers cost-share for raising small grain crops such as cereal rye and oats. Earn \$20/acre for growing a small grain with a legume cover crop!

[View program details and apply.](#)

[Sign up for Small Grains News](#) – our monthly newsletter – to receive the latest information on cost-share, upcoming events and more.

IN THE FIELD

Cereal rye cover crop for reducing herbicides in soybeans



[This research trial](#) from 2019 completed by PFI Cooperator **Sam Bennet** explored different herbicide programs to determine if cover crops could reduce herbicide input costs.

This research found that the cover cropped treatment with no residual herbicide did not decrease soybeans yields or impact weed control.

Taming the waterhemp beast with cover crops

In the world of herbicide-resistant weeds, waterhemp is surpassed by none. Once little more than a nuisance to farmers, this native broadleaf rapidly gained superweed status during the 1990s and 2000s.

In just over 20 years, waterhemp has evolved resistance to six different herbicide groups.

[This 2019 blog post explains how planting cover crops may help.](#)



Keeping dollars on the farm by using rye for weed control in soybean production



Michael Vittetoe of Washington, IA, is using cereal rye to control weeds in soybean production in a few ways: as a chemically-terminated cover crop and by roller crimping and relay cropping rye and soybeans.

Learn more about his practices and how he's keeping dollars on his farm in [this clip from his presentation at the 2021 Fall Cover Crop Boot Camp.](#)

Additional resources

- Practical Cover Cropper video series: [Corn Planter Set Up for Planting Green](#)
- From PFI's YouTube channel: [Impact of Roller-Crimping Cereal Rye + Live Weed Zapper Demonstration - Virtual Field Day](#)
- PFI Cooperators' Research: [Terminating Cereal Rye after Planting Soybeans](#)
- Webinar recording from the Rodale Institute: [No-Till Organic Cover Cropping for Weed Suppression and Soil Health](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events below are listed in central standard time.

Save the date for these upcoming Field Days!

Get ready for an amazing line-up of 40+ farmer-led field days soon to be released on the PFI website! Online registrations begin May 12.

Members: Watch your mailbox for a printed field day guide coming soon.



June 9: Field Day - Profitability with Cover Crops

Hosted by: James Hepp
4-6 p.m. | Rockwell City, IA

James will explore how cover crops make sense financially. Guests will see corn and soybeans growing that were planted into cover crops, and James' relay crop plot that he aims to harvest and sell rye for seed.



June 13: Field Day - No-Till Organic Relay-Cropping

Hosted by: Caleb Akin & Noah Wendt
10:00 a.m.-Noon | Cambridge, IA

Caleb and Noah will discuss how they relay-crop rye and soybeans in their organic no-till system. Attendees will see the organic cultivation equipment they use and their custom-built roller-crimper and planter.

Friends of PFI events

May 12: Field Day - From Grain to Glass... Clean Water=Good Beer!

Hosted by: Chuck White & Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance
1-4:30 p.m. | Spencer, IA

May 24: Field Day - Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy 10th Anniversary Celebration Field Day

Hosted by: Lee Tesdell & Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance
1:30-3:30 p.m. | Slater, IA

*****Visit PFI staff at this event!*****

May 24: Virtual Event - Leadership For Midwestern Watersheds

Hosted by: Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership & NRCS
11 a.m.-4 p.m. | Online

May 31: Webinar - Strategic Farming 2023: Field Notes talks cover crop termination

Hosted by: University of Minnesota Extension
8-8:30 a.m. | Online

June 1: Field Day - Relay Intercropping Field Day

Hosted by: Jason Russell & Iowa Learning Farms
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Monticello, IA

[View more events on our calendar](#)

COVER CROP POLL

Send us your cover crop poll ideas! We want to know what YOU want to know. Reply to this email with your ideas for the next poll.

Have you been able to reduce herbicide applications with cover crops on any fields?

Yes, I no longer apply residual product on some of my fields

Select

Yes, I am making fewer herbicide passes

Select

Not yet, but I plan to in the future

Select

No, my usage is the same

Select

Previous poll results:

Will you apply nitrogen at corn planting to your rye cover-cropped fields this spring?

- **Yes - 68%**
- No - 24%
- Unsure - 4%
- N/A- 4%

CONTACT OUR COVER CROPS TEAM

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Chat with any of us by calling the PFI office at (515)-232-5661.

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