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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

Small
Grains
NEWS
May 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Clover plays a key role in **Doug Alert** and **Margaret Smith's** organic corn-soybean-small grain rotation. The Hampton, IA farmers frost-seed red clover into winter grain crops and, for spring small grains, drill clover with the small grain. They tend to use red clover because of its reliability but have been testing sweet clover as well.

Organically terminating clover: Determining when and how to terminate their clover has been a decades-long process of experimentation, and Doug reports an evolution from fall plowing, to spring plowing followed by cultipacking, to disking (fall, then again in the spring), and for the past three years, rotovating. Doug



rotovates 3" deep, which accomplishes one-pass termination and leaves a mulch of plant material on the soil surface. It's a slow operation but considering the time it takes to do multiple passes using different tools, clover termination is ultimately quicker.

Weighty decisions: To avoid infestation from seed corn maggots, cutworms and armyworms, Margaret and Doug have found that the best window to terminate clover is three weeks prior to corn planting. But, Margaret says, "May is a period of rapid legume growth and N fixation so we're always giving up some nitrogen-fixation when we terminate three weeks early."

PROGRAM UPDATES

New blog post: "Incorporating Oats in Extended Rotations"



In a March shared learning call, **Ben Dwire** from Arco, Minnesota, shared about oat production, from variety selection to post-harvest. Learn how Ben avoids crown and stem rust and how he decides whether to swath or direct cut his oats.

[Read this blog to learn more about his practices.](#)

Reminder: Enroll for small grain cost-share by July 1

The July 1 deadline for small grain cost-share is coming right up!

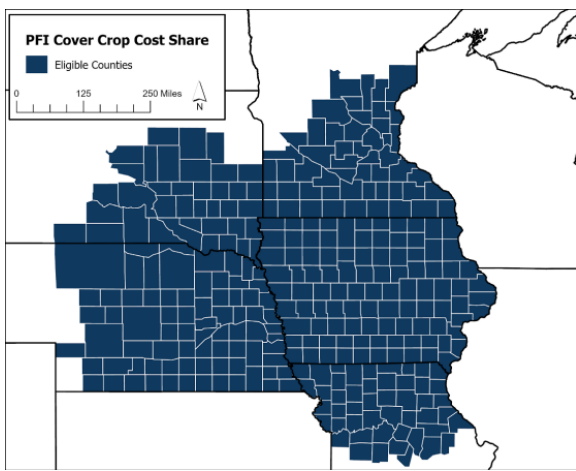
If you farm in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota or Wisconsin and you're raising a small grain with a cover crop containing a legume, you're likely eligible to receive \$20/acre.

[View program requirements.](#)

Enroll today!



PFI also offers fall cover crop cost-share!



Separate from the small grain cost share above, PFI offers **fall cover crop cost-share** in the highlighted counties.

PFI's fall cover crop cost-share is for people seeding cover crops in non-organic corn and soybean fields. Payment is \$10/acre on unlimited acres, and acres can overlap with any publicly funded cost-share program.

You can also [sign up for the Practical Cover Cropper email newsletter](#) to stay in the loop on covers and cost-share.

Welcome Katie to PFI staff

Katie Flinn joins PFI as the cost-share administrative assistant. In this role, she helps administer the field crop cost-share programs and provides customer service to farmers involved in the programs.

Katie, her husband and their six kids reside in Indianola, Iowa, at Milk & Honey Orchard and Apiary, LLC where they keep bees, produce honey and create foodie delights.

[Learn more about Katie.](#)



IN THE FIELD

Report: "Clover Cover Crop Termination Date for a Rye-Corn System"

In 2022, **Dick Sloan** conducted experiments to determine the optimal termination timing for his clover cover crop.

[This research report](#) from Dick's experiments compares the effects of fall termination, spring termination, and spring suppression of a clover cover crop on corn yield.



Blog: “Clover Cover Crop Management”

Wisconsin farmer **Kevin Shelley** has a wealth of experience managing clover within corn-soy-wheat rotations on his own farm through his research with the Farm Nutrient and Pest Management Program at UW-Madison.

Learn why Kevin prefers to frost-seed in March and terminate using herbicide in October in [this recap blog](#) of a 2020 shared learning call.



Additional resources:

- PFI Live from the Farm: [Extended Rotations With Red Clover](#)
- PFI blog: [Small Grains Equipment Essentials](#)
- PFI research report: [Green Manure Cover Crop Seeding and Termination Dates in Wheat-Corn Rotation](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

All times listed are central daylight time

Small Grains Shared Learning Call: Harvest and Handling of Cover Crop Seed

June 2 | Noon - 1 p.m.

After incorporating cover crops with no-till practices to improve soil health, **Chris Gaesser** began growing cover crops for



seed to use on his own farm and to sell to other farmers.

In this upcoming shared learning call, Chris will share about the process of growing cereal rye and other small grains for cover crop seed, including specifics on harvest and post-harvest handling.

[Register here](#)

Join us for our first PFI field days of the season



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 that were planted into cover crops and James' relay crop plot that he aims to harvest to sell the 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.

June 17: PFI Field Day - Creating a Soil Health System with No-till, Cover Crops and Livestock

Hosted by: Ross & Cassie Kurash
4:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Fort Atkinson, IA

July 7: PFI Field Day - Drilling Down on Oat Varieties, Double-Crop Soybeans and Rotational Grazing

Hosted by: Neil & Elizabeth Peterson and sons Paul & Timothy
10 a.m. - Noon | Fonda, IA

Friends of PFI events

June 6: Webinar - Forever Green Winter Barley Grower Call

Hosted by: University of Minnesota

June 7: Webinar - Forever Green Winter Camelina Grower Call

Hosted by: University of Minnesota

11 a.m. - Noon | Online

11 a.m. - Noon | Online

June 8: Celebration - [Iowa Cover Crop Grand Opening](#)

Hosted by: Iowa Cover Crop

4 - 7 p.m. | Jefferson, IA

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

June 13: Webinar - [Forever Green Kernza® Grower Call](#)

Hosted by: University of Minnesota

11 a.m. - Noon | Online

June 14: Webinar - [OATS: Who are the Players in the Organic Oat Scene](#)

Hosted by: Organic Agronomy Training Service

8 - 9 a.m. | Online

June 14: Webinar - [Forever Green Hybrid Winter Rye Grower Call](#)

Hosted by: University of Minnesota

11 a.m. - Noon | Online

[More upcoming events](#)

Contact solveig.orngard@practicalfarmers.org to plan or promote an event.

STRAW POLL

How do you terminate clover?

Answer the poll question below:

Chemically in the spring

Select

Mechanically in the spring

Select

Chemically in the fall

Select

Mechanically in the fall

Select

N/A

Select

Previous poll results:

Which topic are you most interested in learning about at field days this year?

- **Oat production - 32%**
- Summer cover crops - 20%
- Milling and marketing food-grade small grains - 16%

- Relay cropping - 16%
- All of the above - 16%

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

STAY CONNECTED



Looking for more? Contact us today!

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

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