

Small Grains News - Farm efficiency through seeding while weeding

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To: Anna Pesek <anna.pesek@practicalfarmers.org>



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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Exploring efficiency in small grains with the Wepkings



John and Halee Wepking operate Meadowlark Farm and Mill in Ridgeway, Wisconsin, where they grow diverse organic crops, including food-grade corn, wheat, rye and buckwheat that they mill on-site.

They pay close attention to crop rotation, keeping the soil covered whenever possible and using different tillage and weeding practices depending on the crop.

Springtime efficiency: A custom 30-foot Treffler tine weeder mounted with an air seeder helps the Wepkings accomplish two tasks at once. "When we are seeding alfalfa or hay into spring wheat or oats, we do a weed control pass with the tine weeder, scratching the surface while also blowing the seed on," John says.

Removing young weeds: The equipment is set up so that the weeding pass can be as aggressive as needed and then the seed is dropped down behind that onto the loose soil, ideally before rain. "From the road, it looks like you just killed your field. But it's remarkable how small grains will bounce through that. It can really help with mustard pressure and small weeds that get going by mid-April."

Learn more about John and Halee's farm practices [in this blog recapping John's shared learning call in March.](#)

PROGRAM UPDATES

Most acres are filled in our small grains cost-share – but spots still open for wheat growers selling to ADM

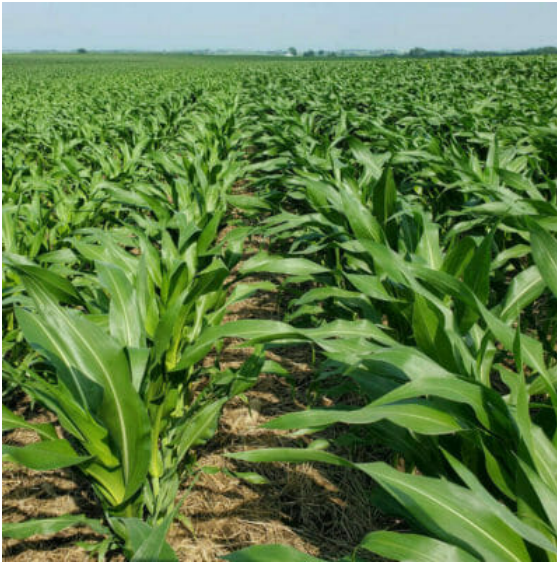


We've reached our goal of enrolling 40,000 acres in our [small grains cost-share program](#) and have run out of guaranteed funding for most locations.

However, for those farmers growing wheat and selling to ADM in Mendota, Illinois, or Lincoln, Nebraska, we still have funding for you!

Thank you for your enthusiasm for this program! [Please fill out an application if you would like to join our waitlist.](#)

Apply to the N Rate Risk Protection Program by April 30



Are rising input costs affecting your farm's profits?

Our **N Rate Risk Protection Program** can help you cut nitrogen applications to corn, saving you money and enhancing farm resilience.

You'll work with PFI agronomists to reduce nitrogen by at least 20 pounds per acre. **If your yield drops, our program will help make up the difference at \$35 per acre.**

Learn more and apply by April 30.

New research report: “Utrisha N Biological Nitrogen Supplement for Organic Corn”



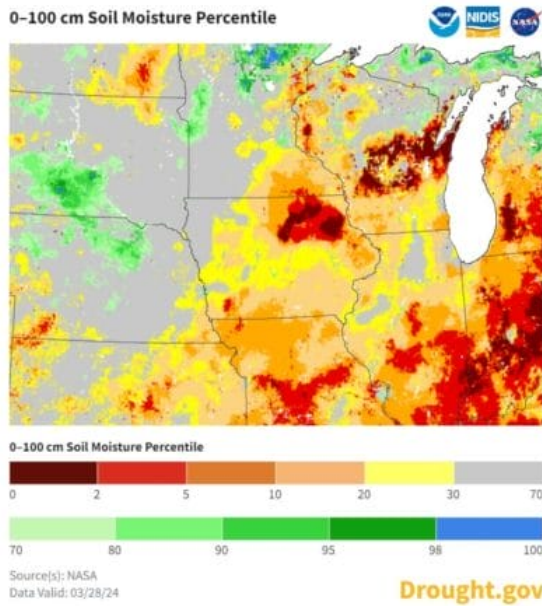
Last season, PFI research cooperators **Keaton Krueger, Scott Shriver and Noah Wendt** performed replicated strip trials testing whether adding Utrisha N, an organic certified fertilizer amendment product that contains N-fixing bacteria, to their typical fertilizer program provided any yield benefits.

Key findings note that the three cooperators found no statistically significant corn yield impacts.

Read their takeaways.

IN THE FIELD

New blog post: “Adding Forage Substance to Sparse Spring Cereal Rye Stands”

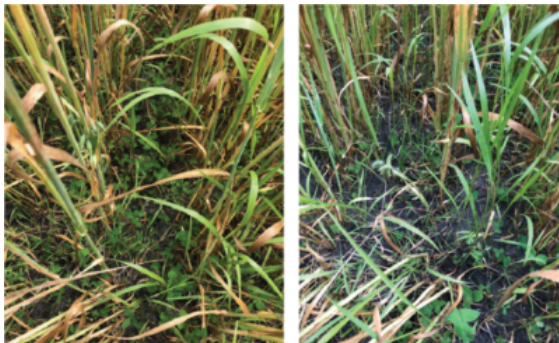


Though there have been a few days of decent rain this spring, most of Iowa is in some degree of drought following a particularly mild and dry winter.

This spurred several PFI farmers to discuss whether oats should be planted into an established rye crop to boost forage availability.

[Hear their perspectives on seeding methods, timing and forage mixes in this recent blog post.](#)

Research report: "Early Season Mechanical Weed Control in Oats"



In their 2020 cooperators' research trial, **Margaret Smith and Doug Alert** sought to find out if a tine weeder could help with early season weed control in oats. They had to switch to using a rotary hoe when the tine weeder pulled up too much residue.

[Read the research report to learn more about the trial and their experiences.](#)

Blog: "Elements of Alfalfa Establishment: Methods for Success with Small Grains in the Mix"



Alfalfa adds value in crop rotations by keeping soil covered and fixing nitrogen for the following crop.

[This blog post recapping a 2022 shared learning call](#) offers suggestions from farmer **Jason Russell** for seeding alfalfa into a nurse crop of small grains to produce a robust alfalfa stand throughout the summer.

Additional resources

- PFI video: **["Tine Weeders: Organic Weed Control"](#)**
- PFI blog post: **["Small Grain Fertility Requirements and Application Strategies"](#)**
- PFI research report: **["Nitrogen Fertilizer for Food-Grade Oats"](#)**
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cropwatch: **["How Can a Warm Winter and Spring Affect Nitrogen Availability for the Upcoming Crop?"](#)**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field day season is quickly approaching



Get ready for our 2024 field day season, boasting nearly 60 field days on farms across Iowa and neighboring states.

Our field days will cover topics from relay cropping to grazing cover crops and beyond. All field days are free and open to the public.

Watch your email inbox and, if you're a member, watch your mailbox for our printed guide in May.

Friends of PFI events

All events listed in Central time.

**April 29: Conference – 2024
Nebraska Plant Science
Symposium**

Hosted by: UN-Lincoln Department
of Agronomy and Horticulture
8 a.m.-5 p.m. | [Online](#)

**April 30: Meet-up – Conservation
on Tap**

Hosted by: Iowa Learning Farms
6-7 p.m. | Ames, IA

**April 30: Field Day – Cover Crop
Field Day**

Hosted by: UN-Lincoln Extension
1-3 p.m. | Concord, NE

**May 5: Educational Program –
Using Local Grains in Bread
Baking**

Hosted by: Des Moines Public Library
1-3 p.m. | Des Moines, IA

**May 15: Conference – ISU Soil
Management and Land Valuation
Conference**

Hosted by: ISU College of Agriculture
and Life Sciences and ISU Extension
8:15 a.m.-4:30 p.m. | Ames, IA

**May 22: Webinar – Ancient
Wheat: The Old Grain with
Prospects**

Hosted by: Rodale Institute
1-2 p.m. | [Online](#)

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact us

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Chat with our team by calling the PFI office at (515)232-5661.

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