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Practical Cover Cropper - Scaling up custom cover crop application + More September events

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From Beth Waage <beth.waage@practicalfarmers.org>

Date Wed 9/11/2024 10:02 AM

To Emily Yaddof <emily.yaddof@practicalfarmers.org>



September 2024

*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*



## Scaling up custom cover crop application with Mike Dickinson

On an overcast, cool morning, 40 people gathered in **Mike Dickinson's** machine shed to learn about scaling up a cover crop business. Mike and business partner **Mark Unruh** formed CoverPro 365 in 2019. CoverPro 365 is an Iowa Cover Crop seed dealer and provides custom cover crop application for nearby farms in Logan, Iowa, and the surrounding area.

**Cover crop application:** They have custom-built a rolling basket harrow air seeder, a Valmar 6056 seed applicator with a seed agitator above the meter roll and a 50-bushel seed tank. It is easy to calibrate with a custom-built hose mount that they adjusted over time to avoid crimping in the hose lines. The

hoses are running within an inch or two of the rolling basket harrows. In 2023, they averaged 33 acres per hour during application.

They can seed rye, pasture mixes, native grasses and other species of cover crops with their harrow seeder. They typically plant rye at a seeding rate of 56 lbs per acre and try to get the rye planted in cornstalks immediately after harvest in October.

**Opportunity with cover crops:** Mike and Mark help their customers navigate cost-share programs and work to make sure they have a successful experience with cover crops. They see opportunity in cover crops and see the value in their business getting more on the landscape. "No till is good, but I feel like there is an opportunity to expand into cover crops to prevent soil loss and at the same time, prevent nitrogen loss," says Mark.

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### Call for on-farm research participants



On-farm research is a great way to see if your long-term practices are paying off for your soil.

We are currently seeking participants for two on-farm research trials:

- Can We Reduce N Rates to Corn and Improve ROI?
- Do Cover Crops Increase the Number of Days Suitable for Field Work?

**Enroll today.**

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### Find cover crop seed and applicators



Do you need to line up cover crop seed or an application service yet this fall?

Use the **Find Cover Crops** website to find seed suppliers, applicators and more near you.

If you are a service provider or you sell cover crop seed, you can also **sign up to be added to our directory.**

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**Nitrogen Rate Risk Protection Program enrollment is open**



Farmers in six Midwestern states who want to save on their next nitrogen bill can now sign up for PFI's Nitrogen Rate Risk Protection Program, designed to lower the risk of cutting the amount of nitrogen they apply.

Farmers who are new to saving on inputs and farmers who've reduced nitrogen rates previously are eligible for the program.

**[Sign up today.](#)**

## IN THE FIELD

### **Blog: "How Does Seeding Date and Method Affect Cover Crop Performance?"**



Fall cover crop seeding is coming up quickly and may even already be underway on some farms.

Review **[this blog](#)** from 2017 to discover the findings of a research project showing the effectiveness of different seeding methods and different dates using a highboy seeder and a grain drill.

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### **Read our 2023 Cooperators' Program report**



In 2023, 48 cooperators participated in 78 research trials in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois.

The trials covered cover crop termination strategies, roller-crimper timing, alternative soil amendments and more.

**[Read the results of some of these trials in our recently published Cooperators' Program report.](#)**

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## Additional resources

- [PFI's Helpful Guide for Choosing Cover Crop Species](#)
- [PFI's Cover Crop Decision Tree and Seeding Rate Recommendations for Cover Crops](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Field day: "Making a Livelihood With Livestock: A Whole-Farm Approach With Forage Crops and Cover Crops"



**Thursday, Sept. 12 | 4-6 p.m. |  
Bouton, IA**

*Hosted by: Dan & Ila Taylor and Noah,  
Sarah and Todd Taylor*

Learn how the **Taylor family** is integrating row crops and livestock, how they manage their cover crops and how they strive for crop diversity.

Attendees will also learn about cover crop management and seeding methods, integrating livestock, and building and maintaining fencing.

**RSVP**

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### Field day: "Livestock Between the Rows: An Adaptive Approach to Diversifying Illinois Row Crop Operation"



**Thursday, Sept. 19 | 9 a.m.-Noon |  
Astoria, IL**

*Hosted by: Luke and Jen Jones with  
Clara, Elliott, Rhett and Emmett*

Visit this diverse Illinois farm where **Luke and Jen Jones** will talk about sheep grazing annual cover crops between cash grain strips and other resiliency minded practices they have implemented on their farm.

**Learn more and RSVP to attend.**

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## Upcoming PFI events

All events listed are in Central time.

### September 12: **Meet-Up – Field Crop Farmer Meet-Up**

*In partnership with ADM*

8-9:30 a.m. | Earlville, IL

### September 13: **Field Day – Multi-Species Cover Crops + Farmland Legacy Award**

*Hosted by: Tim Kelley and Brent Nold*

4-6 p.m. | Elmo, MO

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## Friends of PFI events

### Sept. 13: **Field Day – Agronomy in the Field**

*Hosted by: Iowa State Extension,*

*Doug & Denise Bishop*

5:30-7 p.m. | Manchester, IA

[View our events calendar](#)

## Contact our team

### **Beth Waage**

*Field Crops Education Coordinator*

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

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