Cover cropping is used to keep the soil protected with plants that may or may not be used as an additional cash crop. The main purpose is to increase soil fertility and soil quality; to manage soil erosion; improve water retention; manage weeds, pests, and diseases; and to increase biodiversity and native wildlife. Cover crops can also be used for forage. Later in the season, the biomass left over after harvesting, grazing or after being mowed or roller crimped can be left on the ground to serve as mulch and to recycle nutrients back into the soil (“green manure”).

**Benefits of Cover Crops**

- Increase organic matter
- Reduce soil erosion
- Improve water retention
- Suppress nematodes
- Increase beneficial soil microbes
- Improve nutrient cycling
- Improve weed suppression
- Attract beneficial insect pollinators
- Break detrimental pest cycles
- Stabilize soil temperature
- Can provide an additional cash crop
- Less need for synthetic inputs over time
- Improve crop yields over time
- Improve carbon sequestration

**Potential Considerations**

- Cost of seed and labor to plant and terminate the cover crop
- It can take 3-5 years to see financial gains depending on previous farm and regional conditions
- Possible equipment expenditures
- Time to learn how to choose cover crops appropriately and manage them
- Some long-term crop rotations may not be compatible with cover crops.
Resources and Implementation Guides

NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Code 340
NRCS document detailing best practices in choosing cover crops for conservation purposes. It includes criteria for a variety of purposes and situations. https://bit.ly/3xFWUWr

SARE 2013-14 Cover Crops Survey Report

Cover Cropping for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects

Financial Assistance for Adding Cover Crops
- Apply for the EQIP, CSP, or CIG programs on the NRCS website: https://bit.ly/3vtUol9

Where to Get Seeds
- Check with local food representatives.
- Green Cover: https://greencover.com/
- Kamprath Seed: https://www.kamprathseed.com/

Research on Cover Crops


Wittwer, R. et al. 2017. Cover crops support ecological intensification of arable cropping systems. Scientific Reports 7:41911 https://go.nature.com/3vTUWRI

Learn more about cover crops at The Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems https://bit.ly/3ypW7tD