
Cover crop trends in the United States

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Cover crops have been used to improve agricultural ecosystems since the early days of agriculture; however use declined over the past century with the advances in synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and other agricultural technologies. Today, cover crops are being reconsidered as one viable approach to address growing concerns related to surface water pollution, soil health, and herbicide-resistant weeds. Approximately 2% of grain and oilseed production land in the U.S. includes cover crops in the rotation, according to the most recent census of agriculture (i.e. 2012). This percentage is expected to rise with the increasing availability of cost-share programs and farmer interest across the nation. Revisiting cover crops has revealed knowledge gaps, particularly with regard to the successful establishment and management when herbicides are used in the rotation. Most cover crop species are not listed on herbicide labels in the rotation restrictions or species controlled. This symposium is ideally timed to share information among researchers investigating cover crop and herbicide interactions with a goal of increasing farmer success with cover crops.

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