

# COVER CROP POLICY



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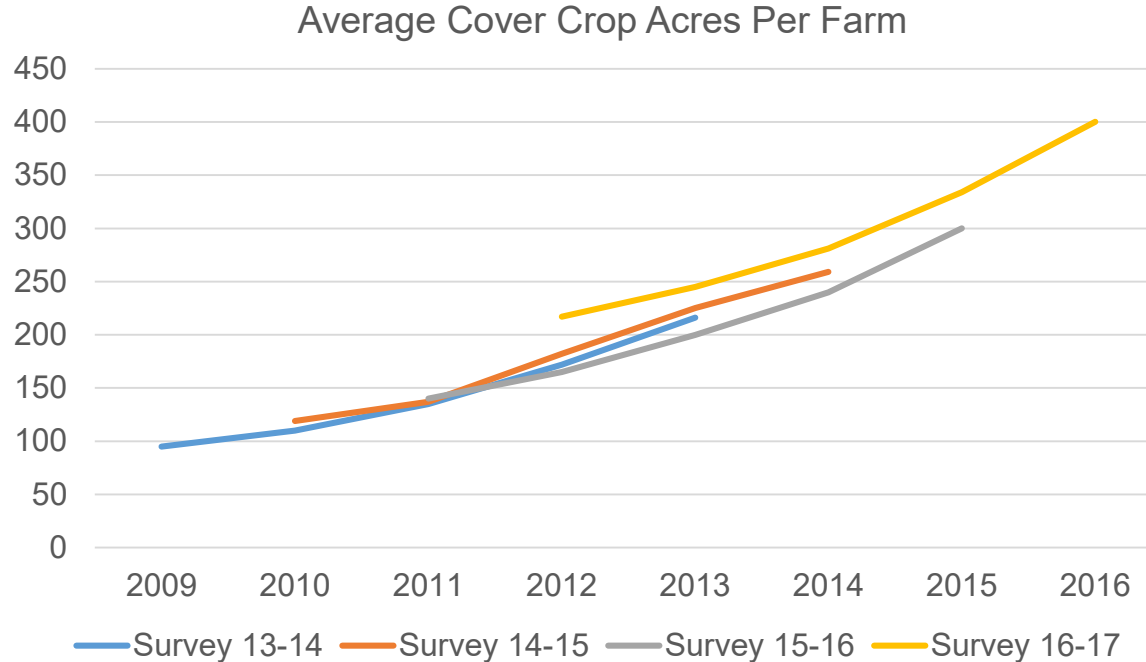


# Presentation Outline

- Progress to date with cover crop adoption
- Policy progress – federal
- Policy progress – state
- Future state policy options
- Changes in institutional policies
- Discussion



# Past Growth in U.S. Cover Crop Acres



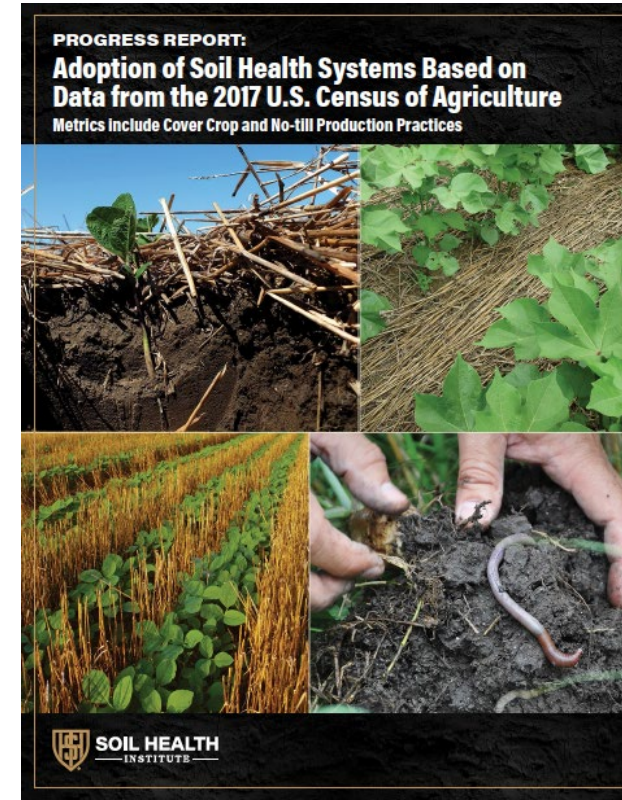
SARE/CTIC National Cover Crop Survey data, showing 5 years of planting data per annual survey

# Projected Growth in U.S. Cover Crop Acres

Cover crop acreage grew by an average 8.4% compounded annually from 2012 to 2017. Assuming that same growth rate for the next decade, U.S. cover crop acreage would look like the following:

Millions of Acres

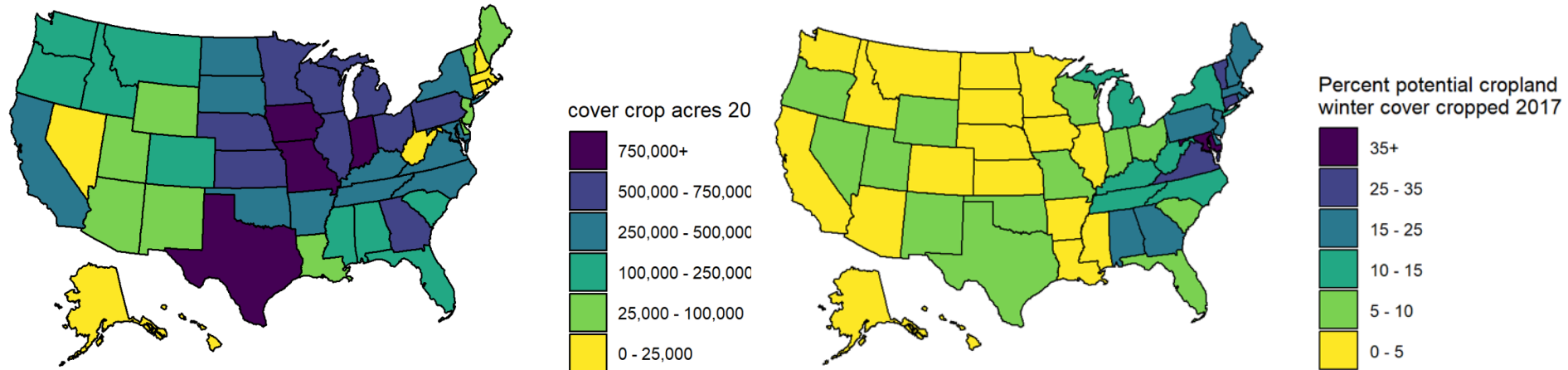
2017	15.4
2018	16.7
2019	18.1
2020	19.6
2021	21.2
2022	23.0
2023	25.0
2024	27.1
2025	29.3
2026	31.8
2027	34.5
2028	37.4
2029	40.5



# Cover Crop Acres in SCCC Region

National Rank	State	2017 Acres	2012 Acres	Percent Increase
1	Texas	1,014,145	911,061	11.3%
13	Georgia	530,888	370,137	43.4%
14	North Carolina	482,934	393,002	22.9%
15	Kentucky	417,284	353,831	17.9%
17	Virginia	409,862	301,959	35.7%
20	Oklahoma	342,564	227,541	50.6%
21	Tennessee	340,525	183,638	85.4%
24	Arkansas	250,274	136,859	82.9%
25	Alabama	229,097	199,215	15.0%
28	Florida	141,848	137,830	2.9%
29	Mississippi	139,639	66,069	111.4%
32	South Carolina	120,511	78,705	53.1%
35	Louisiana	72,646	59,206	22.7%
	SCCC Region	4,492,217	3,419,053	42.7%

# Two Ways of Looking at Cover Crop Acres



Data source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

# Policy Progress — Federal

- Crop insurance – barriers removed, incentives in future?
- Cover crop incentive payments – tremendous growth
- Research funding — has investment kept up with acres?
- Promotion of cover crops in other programs
  - Water quality – EPA and other agencies
  - Watershed management – Corp of Engineers, other agencies
  - Fish and wildlife – US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Climate change – multiple agencies

# Policy Progress — State Legislation

State legislative action on cover crops – differs greatly from state to state. Some examples:

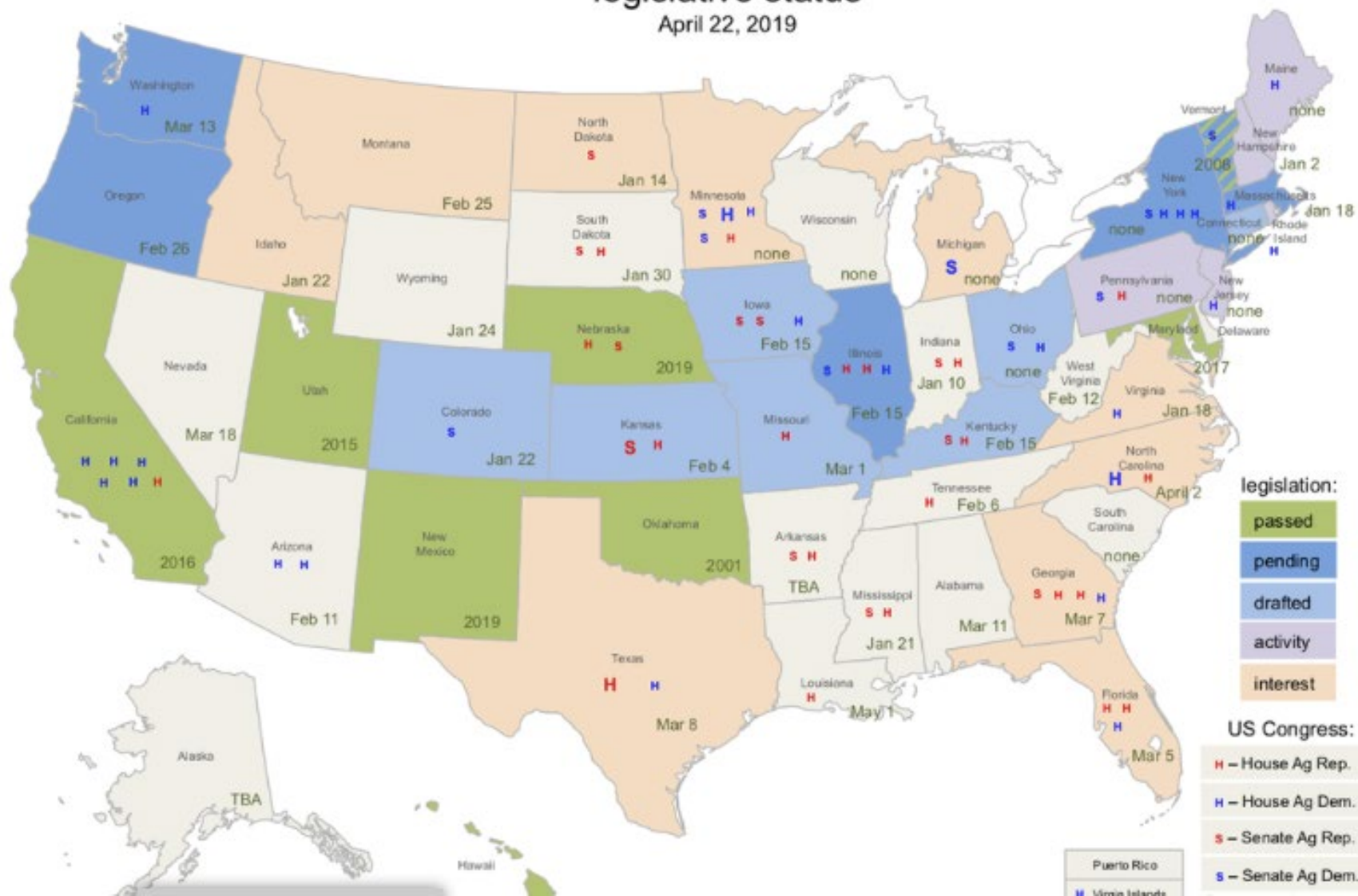
- California Healthy Soils Program (\$7.5 million in 2017)
  - cover crops, no-till, reduced till, composting, conservation, etc.
- Maryland Healthy Soils Program (passed 2017)
  - calls for research, education, and technical assistance
- Nebraska Soil Health Bill (passed 2019)
  - creates the Healthy Soils Task Force and creates a fund



Compiled by Steven Keleti, Tufts University

# Healthy Soils legislative status

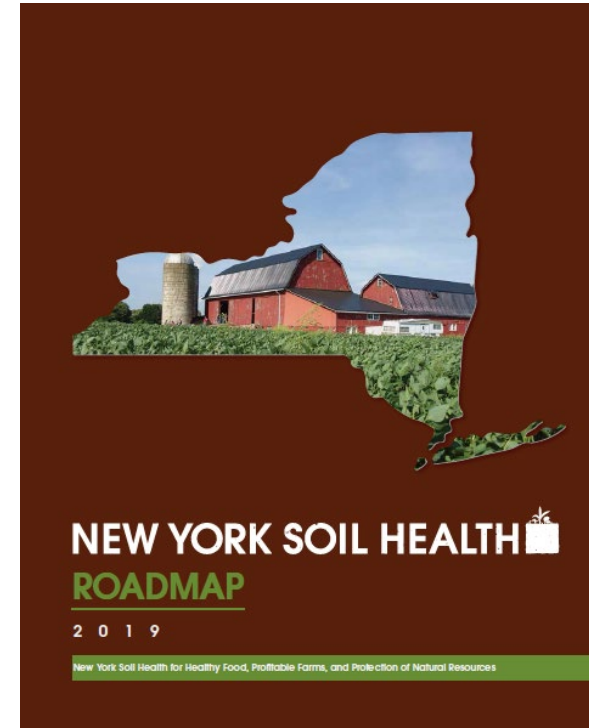
April 22, 2019



# Policy Progress — State Plans

State agency action on cover crops – some states taking action without legislation. Some state planning examples:

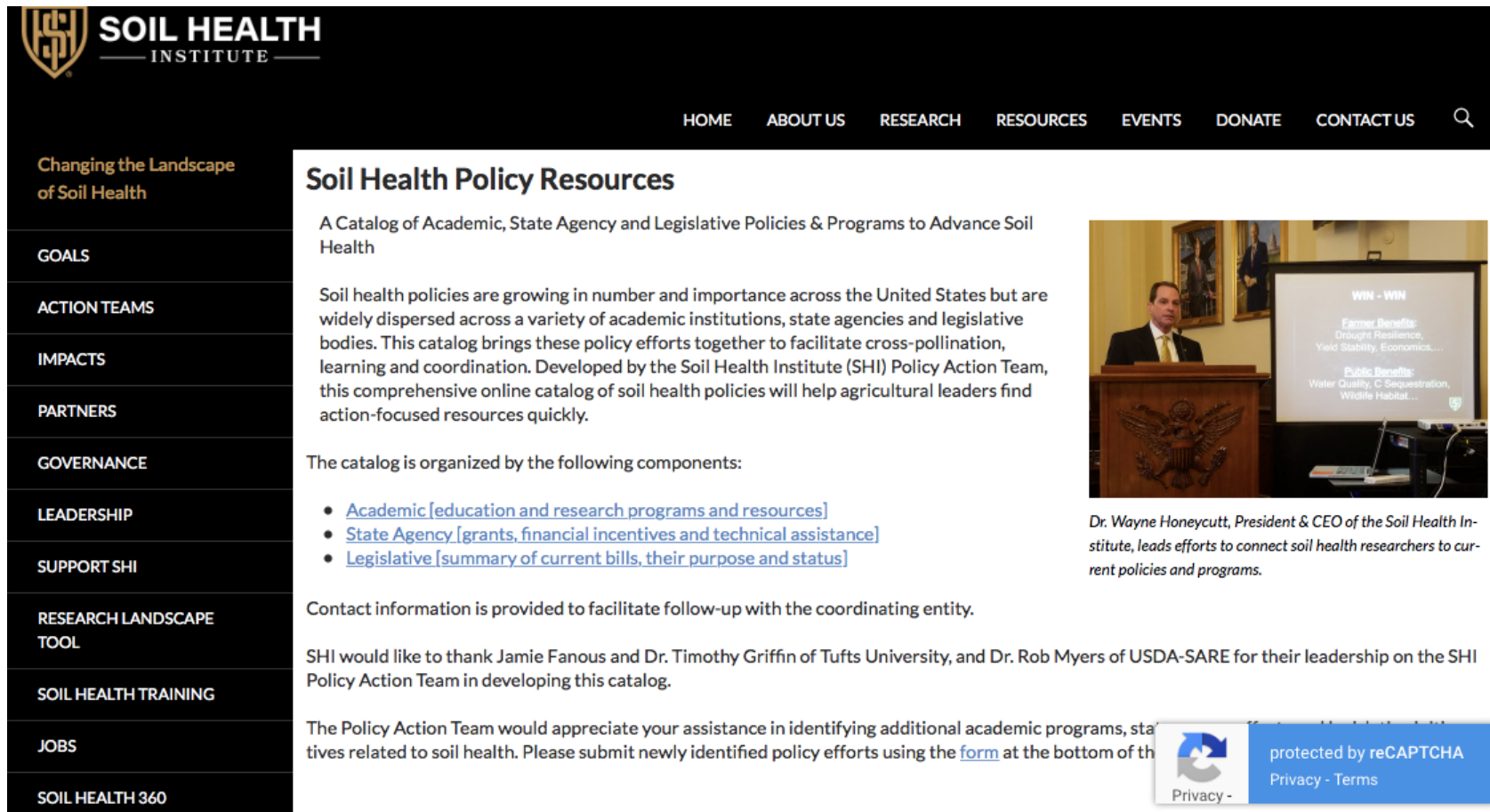
- New York Soil Health Roadmap
- Missouri State Soil Health Plan
- Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan



# Policy Progress — State Incentives

- State incentive funding on cover crops – some states have funding, others do not. Some examples:
- Maryland Dept. of Ag Cover Crop Program - \$22 million
  - Base rate \$45/acre, additional incentives available, this year added an extra \$15 if terminate after May 1 and \$10 to seed into corn by aerial method before September 1
- Missouri – Soil and Water Conservation Program (state sales tax) – providing over \$12 million/yr. to cover crops
- Iowa – some state cost share as well as \$5/acre discount on crop insurance through Iowa Dept. of Ag

# Get more policy information at: <https://soilhealthinstitute.org/resources/catalog/>



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## Soil Health Policy Resources

A Catalog of Academic, State Agency and Legislative Policies & Programs to Advance Soil Health

Soil health policies are growing in number and importance across the United States but are widely dispersed across a variety of academic institutions, state agencies and legislative bodies. This catalog brings these policy efforts together to facilitate cross-pollination, learning and coordination. Developed by the Soil Health Institute (SHI) Policy Action Team, this comprehensive online catalog of soil health policies will help agricultural leaders find action-focused resources quickly.


The catalog is organized by the following components:

- [Academic \[education and research programs and resources\]](#)
- [State Agency \[grants, financial incentives and technical assistance\]](#)
- [Legislative \[summary of current bills, their purpose and status\]](#)

Contact information is provided to facilitate follow-up with the coordinating entity.

SHI would like to thank Jamie Fanous and Dr. Timothy Griffin of Tufts University, and Dr. Rob Myers of USDA-SARE for their leadership on the SHI Policy Action Team in developing this catalog.

The Policy Action Team would appreciate your assistance in identifying additional academic programs, state agencies and legislative efforts related to soil health. Please submit newly identified policy efforts using the [form](#) at the bottom of the page.



WIN - WIN

Farmer Benefits:  
Drought Resistance,  
Yield Stability, Economics,...

Public Benefits:  
Water Quality, C Sequestration,  
Wildlife Habitat,...

Dr. Wayne Honeycutt, President & CEO of the Soil Health Institute, leads efforts to connect soil health researchers to current policies and programs.

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# Future State Policy Initiatives

- Can more states offer a crop insurance discount for using cover crops?
- Should every state have a state soil health plan?
- How can better data on cover crop use be collected?
- Need integrated approach to support cover crops among agencies, commodity groups, universities, and industry

# Institutional Policy Changes

Big movement towards sustainability for many food, ag , and clothing companies, with many using cover crops as a sustainability metric

- Wrangler Jeans – have identified cover crops as a key sustainability strategy for cotton used in their clothing
- General Mills – funding cover crops with soil health as part of regenerative agriculture strategy
- Unilever/ADM – has offered various incentives for planting crops before soybeans in Iowa
- Pepsi/Cargill Low Carbon Corn Program – pays \$10/acre for farmers using cover crops with corn in Iowa
- Tyson Foods – having corn growers use cover crops or sustainability practices near their feed mills
- Opportunities to work with companies in your state?





**What kind of additional policy changes can help drive further cover crop adoption?**