



"One reason we got started with cover crops was additional feed and forage for our livestock. Cow/calf represents about 80% of our income here. We rely on our cows and calves to make us the

money, and we can utilize more of the crop residue in the fall by having a mix of cover crops out there for them to graze."

"We are trying to trim our costs and keep our production up there, and I think you can do that. Instead of spending money on fertilizer and chemicals, we spend the money on cover crops."

Scott Kolousek, Wessington Springs, SD

Watch Profiles in Soil Health:

"Benefits of Perennial Grass System" (04:47)

"By maintaining a grass cover, we can hold the moisture we do get longer. Even though the previous two years were drought years, I did not need to destock due to the benefits of my rotational grazing system."



"Instead of just growing corn and beans, we have got some spring wheat, corn, and bean rotations. We also grow some oats, and occasionally some barley, it just depends on what our feed needs are for our livestock. By incorporating the small grain into the rotation, we are able to really shine with our cover crop behind that rotation."

"This is another avenue we use to add some diversity in our soil, for our crops. Now that we have also incorporated our livestock back into certain fields that are near the farm, during the winter season, there is a little more diversity there as well."

"The economics of farming have to work, you still have to be able to pencil in a profit when you are putting in your grain. But, we have found that we can produce the yields for our wheat that can make it profitable and then by following with a cover crop, our corn and our soybeans are more profitable the next year."

Brian and Jamie Johnson, Frankfort, SD

Watch "South Dakota Soil Story with Brian and Jamie Johnson" (03:40)

"I use a no-till farming system and a diversified rotation. Hopefully long term, I'll be building a resilient soil. Resilient is a word I heard and that has stuck with me. If it is wet, if it is dry, if it is cold, if it is hot. I want my soil to protect me and handle situations without costing me a crop. So, building a resilient soil is a goal of mine."



Sheene, Jadon and Jonathon Rohrbach, Roscoe, SD
Watch Our Amazing Grasslands: "Rohrbach Ranch"



"We learned to take our landlords with us to the fields as we went on our journey."

JP & Holly Heber, Zell, SD

Watch Profiles in Soil Health:
"Cover Crops and Business Partners" (03:03)



Economics Case Study:
Jorgensen Land and Cattle
(Parts 1-5)

Watch "Merit or Myth: The Money Side of Soil Health Practices." www.meritormyth.com

Watch Profiles in Soil Health:

"Building a Resilient Soil" (04:47)



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The Economics of Soil Health

*As Described by
South Dakota Producers*



South Dakota
Soil Health Coalition



South Dakota
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

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South Dakota farmers and ranchers are successfully using soil health practices and seeing economic benefits. The five principles are armor the soil (surface residue), limit disturbance, add plant diversity, keep a living root as long as possible, and integrate livestock where possible.

The following South Dakota producers have shared their successes with the economics of soil health by using no-till farming, integrating cover crops, improving grasslands through management changes and incorporating crop diversity and livestock.

"We did not increase our numbers, we just grazed the cattle we have longer on the pastures through rotational grazing thereby reducing the amount of hay we need to store and feed."



Steve and Paula Livermont, Martin, SD
Our Amazing Grasslands: "Rotational Grazing" (04:09)



"As far as economics, we sat down and said if we go the no-till route we do not have to have as much equipment. We could spend more money on adapting and putting some features onto the

equipment that could help with no-till farming. It would still be more efficient than going the whole tillage route and buying discs and everything like that."

"We see that no-till minimizes your risks in say a rainy wet year, or a hot dry summer, with 90-100 degree heat that is continuous. It just seems like it is saving some of your bushels out there. We plan to stick with it and keep going with the no-till process because we believe it works."

Liz and Steve Sigdestad, Pierpont, SD
Watch Profiles in Soil Health:
"Transitioning to No-Till" (04:24)

"The biggest reason for reducing tillage in South Dakota is we have always got a problem with moisture, especially the eastern third. We either have too much or too little, it is never just an even amount." Our system is more stable and even.



"So, if you can find a way to carry that moisture forward it really helps out. One of the things we are trying to do with no-till, is take that spring moisture into the soil profile and carry it through the summer. We can really increase our average yields that way."

John and Megan Shubeck, Centerville, SD
Watch Profiles in Soil Health: "No-Till Works" (05:11)



"My goal for the farm is to reduce our inorganic fertilizer by 40-to-50 percent {through the use of cover crops}. It's an ambitious goal, but I think it is very attainable." - Kurt Dagel, Agronomist, Olsen Custom Farms

Watch Profiles in Soil Health: "Increasing Organic Matter, Reducing Costs" Part 3 of 4 mini series (02:09)

"Cover crops allowed us to graze the cattle more months of the year, our feed needs were diminished, and the workload dropped to just a fraction of what it was in the past. We also needed a lot less equipment with this plan. So, for us it allowed a better quality of life for me and my family, and as it turned out it is a better quality of life for the soil."

"Our decisions were initially driven by the economics. That is why we went this way, because it was better for us economically. The workload, well, we would have done whatever work was necessary. It just so happens the use of season-long cover crops for forage is less work, too."

Trevor Zantow, Leola, SD
Watch Profiles in Soil Health:
"Benefits of Cover Cropping System" (04:47)



"We have seen a greater economic value through the use of cover crops, that is less fuel being used and it is less time we spend to feed cattle. Economic viability is crucial with the declining prices, so the cover crops have given us another option for being more diverse, for working the cattle into the cropland system for grazing residue and building soil. Cover crops have greatly helped our feed situation."



Jared and Lacey Namken, Lake Norden, SD
Watch Profiles in Soil Health:
"Cover Crops and Grazing" (03:50)



Jared and his family recently transitioned from a conventional tillage to a no-till farming system. "You are going to save money on fuel. You are going to save money on fertilizer because that fertilizer is staying where you put it."

"Through all these different practices you are probably saving quite a bit of money, but also in the long run you are gaining yield because you are increasing the value of the land."

Jared Questad, Baltic, SD
Watch Profiles in Soil Health: "Transitioning to No-Till" (05:17)



"You can't just start no-tilling in one year and cover crop it and be a perfect year, year-one. But after three years, you are going to start seeing a difference. I would say within a three year span my soybean yields went up three to five bushels an acre across the farm on average and corn saw a 10 to 12 bushel increase, and that's been pretty consistent."

Jesse Hall and Family, Arlington, SD
Profiles In Soil Health:
"Crop Diversity & Livestock Integration" (04:09)