

Engaging Farmers in Cover Crop Work

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Why Cover Crops?

Cover crops can provide many benefits for the soil in crop production systems.

- Benefits can include:
 - Soil and Water Conservation
 - Reduced Erosion
 - Increased Infiltration Rates
 - Increased Soil Organic Matter
 - Improved Nitrogen Cycling
 - Suppression of Weeds
 - Reduced Nutrient Loss
 - Enhanced Soil Biology



Our Conservation Goals

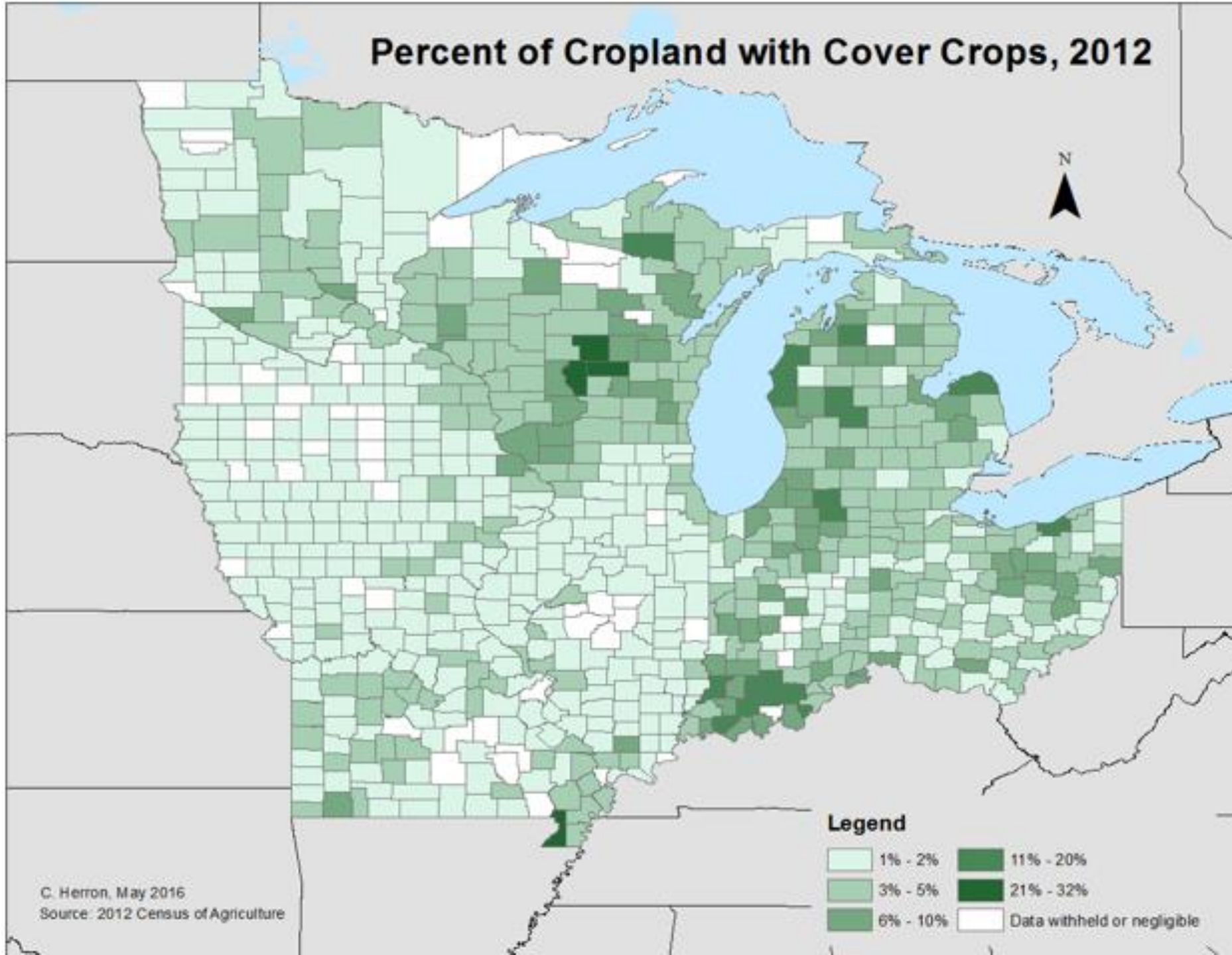
Moving away from this



Towards more of this



Percent of Cropland with Cover Crops, 2012



C. Herron, May 2016
Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture



Why are more farms not utilizing cover crops?



- Cost
 - Seed, Planting, and Termination Expenses
- Limited time and narrow planting windows
- Possibility of planting failure

- Unfamiliar with Cover Crop Options
- Uncertain on how to manage
- Not sure what cover crops to use in their cropping system
- “We have always done it this way”



Overcoming Objections through Education

- Farmers are learning how cover crops can work for them, management strategies, and cost benefits through resources and training from Universities, Educational Institutions, and Government Agencies
- Programs offered include:
 - Educational Conferences
 - Local outreach programs
 - Crop Selection Tools
 - Farmer Lead Workgroups
 - Field days and on Farm Trials
 - Demonstration Plots (Farm Tech Days)



Overcoming Cost Objections

The cost of establishing a cover crop can be highly variable based upon what cover crop, or mix, is selected and planting method used.

To assist with establishment of cover crops many cost share options are available including:

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) NRCS
- USDA Equip Grants
- Local Watershed Groups
- Farmer-led Coalitions (Yahara Pride Farms)



Moving Forward

As farmers see the benefits first hand more acres of cover crops are being planted

- Cover crops are becoming more accepted by the farming community as “normal” and more widely used
- Farmer-led work groups are growing, and additional groups forming
- Additional resources and research findings are readily available
- Seed costs are decreasing
 - More seed companies are offering cover crop seed
 - As seed production increases, unit prices are decreasing





Soybeans planted into
Roller Crimped Cereal Rye

“The land is my livelihood, being a good steward of the land and focusing on soil health will ensure my farm stays productive for my life, and for generations to come. That is why I plant cover crops”

Jason Henschler, Farmer - Clinton Wisconsin



Questions or Comments?

Thank you!

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