



# KANSAS Soil Health ALLIANCE

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KSSOILHEALTH.ORG

*Improving and protecting Kansas soils through farmer and rancher led education and resources.*

## Upcoming Events

### Kansas Soil Health Alliance Events Calendar

Join us for "The Kansas Soil Health Partnership Forum," a monthly one-hour webinar hosted by the Kansas Soil Health Alliance featuring farmers, ranchers, educators, and ag professionals providing insightful views and sharing personal experiences on how they are working to improve and protect Kansas's soils. It will be held via Zoom on the last Thursday of the month from noon to 1pm. If you are unable to join us live, you can view the recording by visiting the [Resources Section](#) of our website.

Follow [this link](#) or use the QR code below to register.

# KANSAS SOIL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP FORUM

Join Us for this Monthly  
Webinar Series

Last Thursday of each month  
Noon – 1pm

Who should join?  
Farmers, ranchers, students,  
government employees,  
researchers, anyone involved in  
agriculture.  
Everyone is welcome!

## Upcoming Webinars

**February 27**

Gretchen Sassenrath  
K-State University Crop  
Production Agronomist

Historical View & a Look  
Forward at Conservation  
in Kansas

**March 27**

Marlon Winger, USDA, NRCS Regional  
Soil Health Specialist

An Introduction to CEMA 204 Adaptive  
Management for Soil Health.  
Using on farm Trials with Replicated Plots &  
Statistical Analysis to Learn and Adjust the  
Application of Various Conservation Practices.

**April 24**

Lance Gunderson,  
President and Co-  
Owner of Regen Ag Lab

Interpretation of the  
Haney Soil Health Test



[Register here!](#)



While we are not currently hosting any events in person, there are still several learning opportunities taking place in the next few months. Our website's events calendar contains all local and virtual events we find that are talking about soil health. The calendar begins to slow down in the spring, but there are still several great conferences and workshops to help expand your soil health knowledge and grow your peer network. Take time now to review the calendar and plan your next learning experience!

Do you know of an event that isn't on the calendar?

Contact [Joanna@KSsoilhealth.org](mailto:Joanna@KSsoilhealth.org) to get it added.

[Upcoming Events – Kansas Soil Health Alliance \(kssoilhealth.org\)](https://kssoilhealth.org)

## **Soil Health Coaching Program**

The Kansas Soil Health Alliance has been working to launch a coaching program. Currently, this program is on hold due to funding. Our

organization believes in the importance of this project, and we are looking forward to the establishment and growth of the program in the future. Stay tuned for more details.

## **Conservation District Events**

Many local conservation districts are planning a variety of events this year. Here are some events that may be in your area:

- **Farmer to Farmer Discussions:** These are designed to be casual, farmer led discussions about water and soil conservation practices and topics.
- **Management Unit events:** These are collaborative events discussing soil health topics hosted by several conservation districts working together.
- **Local Work Group events:** These are used to help county conservation offices learn what issues are important to local residents. The identified topics help to make recommendations to state officials regarding the concerns and priorities at the local level.

Each conservation district's discussion schedule is different. To learn more about your local conservation district's meeting schedule, you can contact the office and/or follow them on Facebook. Unsure which conservation district you are in? Look here: [Conservation Districts | Kansas Association of Conservation Districts \(kacd.net\)](https://www.kacd.net).

# **Soil Health Opportunities**

## **Kansas Grazing Exchange**

The Kansas Grazing Exchange helps match available forage with livestock producers for mutually beneficial grazing relationships. If

you have available grazing or you're looking for grazing, consider posting a listing. It's free and easy to use.

[Kansas Grazing Exchange – Kansas Soil Health Alliance](#)  
([kssoilhealth.org](http://kssoilhealth.org))

### **"No-Till Farmer" magazine subscription opportunity**

The Conservation Ag Foundation, founded in January 2024 is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on equipping farmers with the knowledge and tools to adopt conservation agriculture practices such as no-till, strip-till, and cover cropping. These practices enhance soil health, protect water quality, and ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture.

As part of this initiative, Kansas Soil Health Alliance has been awarded a scholarship from the Conservation Ag Foundation (CAF) in partnership with "No-Till Farmer," providing our members a FREE 1-year subscription to "No-Till Farmer" magazine. To claim your complimentary 12-issue subscription, please complete [this form](#) to confirm your eligibility.

### **FarmTender**

This new service helps match farmers using regenerative practices with willing landowners. Go to [www.FarmTender.us](http://www.FarmTender.us) to learn more. It is free to browse, and, for a nominal annual fee, you can register and read the profiles of landowners and their land parcels, or of regenerative farmers, or post one yourself!

### **Kansas State University Survey on Cover Crops**

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION ON  
COVER CROPS!**

Whether you're growing cover crops or not, we want to hear from you!



Your insights will help researchers develop innovative projects and publications exploring how cover crops affect soil health and crop productivity.

**Scan the QR Code to take the Survey Today!**

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Kansas State University, in collaboration with the Colorado Conservation Tillage Association (CCTA) and the Kansas Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) have created a survey evaluating the use of cover crops in the semi-arid Great Plains region. Your insights will help researchers develop innovative projects and publications exploring how cover crops affect soil health and crop productivity.

For questions regarding information in this survey, please feel free to contact Dr. Augustine Obour (KSU Soil Scientist) at 785-625-3425 ext. 215 or [about@ksu.edu](mailto:about@ksu.edu) and Dr. Logan Simon (KSU Southwest Area Agronomist) at 620-276-8286 or [lsimon@ksu.edu](mailto:lsimon@ksu.edu).

To complete the survey, [click here](#).

This survey is not associated with the Kansas Soil Health Alliance.

**Cornell University Survey on Rye**

A team of researchers at Cornell University has created a survey to understand the many ways farmers are growing and using cereal rye, including for grain, forage, and as a cover crop. Their team is also developing new rye varieties and want to understand important breeding priorities for different end uses. Participation is voluntary. At the end of this project, research results will be shared through presentations, published in peer-reviewed publications, and shared with stakeholders via a white paper and farmer/industry publications.

For more information about the research, contact the project leader, Virginia Moore at [vm377@cornell.edu](mailto:vm377@cornell.edu).

To complete the survey, [click here](#).

This survey is not associated with the Kansas Soil Health Alliance.

### **Survey from Kansas Geological Survey**

Kansas Geological Society and University of Vermont have created a survey looking at the emphasis on the hydrologic function of soil which can be an indicator of water quality improvement from soil health management. The survey results will be used to assess the state-of-the-science on how soil health management both affects and is affected by water resources, and identify key areas where further research is needed to help effectively manage soil and water resources.

For more information about the research, contact the project leader, Sam Zipper at [samzipper@ku.edu](mailto:samzipper@ku.edu).

To complete the survey, [click here](#).

This survey is not associated with the Kansas Soil Health Alliance.

## **Featured Stories**



## **6 Ways to Save Money While Improving Soil Health**

**Salute Soil Health: Find ways to make the most of your inputs while on your soil health journey**

Profit margins will be tight in 2025. Commodity prices have trended downward and input prices have trended upward, leaving potential profit margins tight and highly dependent on good crop yields. Consider these six ideas to make your potential profit margin a little better.

**1. Scout, scout, scout.** Get out in your fields frequently throughout the growing season and scout for insect damage, weed pressure, nutrient deficiency and general crop health. Apply inputs only as needed, when the potential damage reaches economic thresholds, and only on fields that reach these thresholds.

**2. Fine-tune nitrogen.** One of the largest input costs of corn production is nitrogen, so it has the largest potential for controlling input costs. Apply nitrogen in multiple passes close to when the corn crop needs it. Many successful soil health farmers have switched to a last application of nitrogen right before tassel with Y-drops, considering what the soil moisture conditions look like for the rest of the summer. Not every field gets the same treatment.

**3. Use what you have.** You want to plant cover crops this fall, but you don't own a drill and don't think you can fit it into your budget. Vertical tillage tools are more prevalent than drills these days. An air seeder mounted on a vertical tillage tool makes an adequate cover crop seeder for low-input costs. You can use an existing tool, spend a little money and time, and have a very effective high-acre cover crop seeder.

**4. Adjust cover crop rates.** While there are minimum rates you want to use for cover crops, sometimes there is some leeway to reduce rates. Any cover crop is better than no cover crop. Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office can use the cover crop seeding calculator to fine-tune rates to meet seeding requirements and standards while potentially reducing original seeding rates.

**5. Focus on furrow openers.** If you only have so much money to spend on planter updates, start with furrow openers. In a no-till system, openers are vital for correctly placing seed and getting even emergence. Focus your available funds for planter upgrades on new openers.

**6. Do your own research.** On-farm trials are vital to the economic success of an operation. Take some acres and implement trials to see the impact. Try applying different rates of nitrogen, different seeding populations, different forms of nitrogen, different times of application, or whatever you think can improve your bottom line.

Profit is the primary thought of every farmer. Yields are fun to talk about at the coffee shop, but your goal is to maximize profit. In 2025, this may be more vital than ever. Spend time thinking about your operation and how you can maximize profit this year and in years to

come. Remember that soil health is a journey. Sometimes the steps are small, but keep moving forward.

From FarmProgress author Don Donovan



## **Launching Health Soil Practices for the Farm's Next Generation**

**LEAD Comment: LEAD 39 graduate John Krohn isn't working to build soil health on his farm just for fun. He wants his farm to be healthy for the next generations.**

I still remember my early days of farming, starting with disking the ditches before working the entire field. When it rained, new channels would inevitably carve through the freshly tilled soil. I absolutely loved the smell while cultivating rapidly growing corn, and nothing compared to the sight of vibrant green stalks rising against the rich, dark soil — a view that filled me with pride. But then, after a hard rain, I'd watch that soil between the rows wash away down the hills.

Fast forward to today, and I'm still farming the same ground. However, my understanding and appreciation for the soil have grown immensely. My goal now is simple: Keep every bit of soil on my farm right where it belongs.

## **First steps**

The first major step was transitioning to no-till and, more recently, adopting cover crops. Now I am trying to build soil instead of losing it. Having living roots in the ground for a longer part of the year boosts soil biology, fostering the development of organic matter. This approach not only boosts soil productivity, allowing me to use slightly less fertilizer while achieving great yields, but it also makes the soil more resilient. It can better withstand the weight of my combine and grain carts, and it holds more nutrients, reducing runoff and improving long-term sustainability.

My nutrient-management strategy also has evolved. In the past, we'd apply nutrients long before the crop needed them, risking loss through leaching or runoff. Now, with center pivots already running during the summer, I can "spoon-feed" the crop precisely when it needs nutrients. This approach minimizes nitrogen loss to groundwater and ensures the crop has exactly what it needs to thrive.

Being part of LEAD 39 helped connect me with like-minded peers who share a commitment to resource preservation. Additionally, my involvement with the Nebraska Corn Board has allowed me to have a say in research funding toward projects that address concerns such as groundwater protection, carbon intensity and soil health.

# Getting irrigation right

Irrigation management has seen significant improvements too. Years ago, we relied on natural gas irrigation engines, running pivots when fields seemed dry. Converting to electric wells in the early 2000s was a game-changer, involving less maintenance and more efficiency. But even then, we'd often run the pivots simply to get ahead of load control restrictions. Today, technology guides my decisions. Soil moisture sensors and crop health monitors provide real-time data, helping me irrigate far less than before while maintaining healthy crops.

I understand that no single practice can address every environmental concern surrounding modern crop production. However, I take pride in doing my part to build healthier soils, manage nutrients responsibly and conserve the Ogallala Aquifer. As someone who earns a living from the land, I feel a deep responsibility to preserve these resources not just for myself, but for the next generation of farmers. When my kids grow up, I hope they have an opportunity to be part of a farm that's more sustainable and productive than ever.

Krohn is a graduate of LEAD Class 39.

Written by John Krohn in the FarmProgress blog

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