



# PROFILES IN soil health

**Jim Iserman**  
LaSalle County, Illinois  
Acres: 900  
Crops: Forage Corn, Soybeans, and Wheat rotations  
Covers: Cereal Ryegrass, Radish, Turnips, & Oats



## A Sustainable, Diverse Operation

Jim Iserman and Father Dave work 900 acres in Livingston and LaSalle Counties, Illinois. One hundred twenty of those acres are in permanent forage and the rest are in Ag production using a corn-soybean-wheat rotation.

Jim has successfully merged his row crop and livestock operation and his use of cover crops has been a large part of its success. So far, he loves the results. His cows—and his soils—seem pleased with the benefits as well.

On a chilly morning last fall, Iserman spoke to local producers at a local cover crop field day. He shared his experience using soil-building cover crops in his diverse operation.

Jim has 91 cows and calves in his operation located just outside of Streator, IL. Jim uses a good blend of conservation for production agriculture with forage

and grazing management. For six or seven years, he has successfully used fall forage for cover crops with radishes, turnips, and oats for grazing after a wheat crop and he's used cereal rye grass as early spring grazing ahead of his soybean crop. He drills all crops and manages the farm using minimum tillage.

Typically, Jim plants cover crops with a spinner planter after wheat. He recently started using aerial cover crop applications into corn-soybean rotations as part of an experiment for additional fall and winter grazing options.

Jim has experimented with crimson clover and annual rye grass just last year but is still evaluating how well plants held up over winter.

According to Jim, cover crops have improved his soil quality and increased yields of agricultural commodity crops. Cover crops also add diverse and beneficial forage options for their livestock operation.

Jim's cowherd clearly enjoys the tasty forage cover crop treats and Jim has seen clear evidence of how the soil profile and organic matter development has

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improved. Increased activity and higher yields from expanding soil microorganism populations is undeniable.

Local District Conservationist for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Mark Baran works with the family to fine-tune their operation and strategies. Baran is impressed with the progress the Iserman family has made with soil health, grazing management, and cover crop species selection.

According to Baran, "The Iserman operation here confirms the feasibility of using cover crops on a diverse and modern farm. It shows the results are economically profitable and ecologically sustainable.

Cover crops might be an 'old' conservation practice, but they make a whole lot of sense for today's farmer too."

*We use minimum tillage. To do anything else would not make sense.*

*- Jim Iserman, landowner*



**Jim Iserman** has found a way to use row crops, grass-fed cattle, and cover crops. The combination is a sweet triecta!



To learn more about cover crops and other soil health improvement ideas, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)