



# ALABAMA CHAMPION OF soil health

**Myron Johnson**

Henry County

Crops: wheat, rye, oats, cotton, and  
peanuts (pasture and hay)

Planting: conservation tillage

Cover: rye



## *Creating new tools to manage residue and improve soil health*

Myron Johnson, a fourth generation dryland row crop farmer from Henry County, knows that good soil health plays a vital role in a farmer's economic bottom line. He has taken strides to improve his soil health and increase his organic matter.

On his 2,000 acres he raises 1,400 acres of wheat, rye, oats, cotton, and peanuts. He has 500 acres of pasture and grows 100 acres of hay for his cow/calf operation. Cotton is his major crop because, he said, "it has the most potential for profitable return."

Johnson was convinced that growing and planting into a heavy cover of rye would increase his soil



High residue left after planting rye helps protect Johnson's soil in the hot fields of southeastern Alabama.

fertility. He said that having more crop residue on the soil's surface helps improve yields during droughts, protects the soil from erosion, increases water infiltration, lowers the evaporation rate, keeps his soil cooler during the summer, increases beneficial soil



Johnson's crop roller will help producers manage heavy residue.

microorganisms, and improves weed management. He knows first-hand that conservation tillage also saves soil, fuel, time, labor, and machinery.

Originally Myron planned to use a drum roller to flatten the rye for planting. However, after studying the head-high rye and realizing the errors that could occur if the cover crop was not rolled in the correct direction, Myron went to work designing an implement to flatten the cover down and prepare

He also developed a new device he calls a "coupling plow" to terminate cotton stalks and shred them in one pass. This process will let him better manage the cotton residue and reap the benefits to his soil health. He filed for a patent on the "coupling plow" also. He hopes it will be ready to sale this fall.

Johnson knows that investing in soil health helps his farming operation. He said, "I can visually see the soil is healthier than it had been in the past. My increased crop yields confirm that fact."

*"I can easily see the soil is healthier than it has been in the past."*

*- Myron Johnson*

the soil in one pass. This innovation would change his farming operation forever. Not only did the design work, but it excelled above his expectations. Johnson has since planted all of his acreage using conservation tillage.

Want to unlock the secrets in YOUR soil?  
Go to: [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)