United States Department of Agriculture

INDIANA CONSERVATION CHOICES
Cropland

Conservation practices that help improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide other natural resource benefits.

INDIANA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
May 2019

Are you interested in getting the most out of your cropland? Whether you are interested in soil health, controlling erosion, or improving your nutrient-use efficiency, proper management of your cropland will help you achieve your goals and interests.

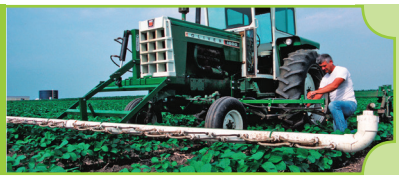
Cropland management is providing your soil with the proper care it needs to remain healthy and provide the benefits you desire, and considers: soil, water, animals, plants, and air. The goal of cropland management is healthy, productive land that accommodates any number of uses.

A soil health management system is key to productive and resilient cropland. This includes controlling erosion, maintaining cover, managing nutrients, and maximizing live roots (crops and cover crops) throughout the year.

Benefits can include increased soil organic matter, improved resilience to drought and floods, improved nutrient cycling, and overall increased profits.

The first step is to get a conservation plan to come up with a series of suggested activities. In essence, your plan is a "road map" to guide you from where you and your land are to where you want to be. It can enable you to make educated decisions for your pastures, keep you from making costly management mistakes, and possibly help qualify you for financial programs.

This factsheet lists common conservation practices for cropland. To learn more about managing your land, visit your local NRCS office. We can help you make the right choices to protect and improve your land and other resources.

		Description	Benefits
Reduced Tillage		Minimizing the intensity and frequency of tillage, including no-till, strip-till and mulch till.	» Protects the soil with residues which decrease erosion caused by wind or rain. » Minimizes compaction and runoff. » Saves fuel and time.
Crop Rotation		Growing a diverse number of crops in as many years as possible, such as small grains or hay in a corn/soy rotation.	» Reduces erosion. » Manages crop pests (insects, disease, weeds). » Adds soil biological diversity.
Cover Crops		Grasses, legumes and broadleaves planted for seasonal cover.	» Reduces erosion. » Increases soil organic matter. » Traps and cycles nutrients. » Improves water infiltration and water-holding capacity. » Fixes compaction.
Fertilizer & Manure Mgmt		Using the right source, rate, time, and placement of nutrients to maximize crop use and minimize loss.	» Nutrient applications to maintain productivity based on soil tests. » Improves nutrient-use efficiency. » Reduces nutrient loss. » Protects surface and groundwater.
Pesticide Management		Managing pests (insects, weeds and diseases) and promoting the growth of healthy plants while minimizing chemical loss.	» Utilizes IPM strategies and scouting prior to pesticide applications. » Reduces pesticide risks to water, pollinators and other beneficial organisms. » Reduces the risk of herbicide-resistant weeds.
Buffers		Planting strips of grasses and wildflowers, trees, and/or shrubs around fields or bodies of water.	» Improves water quality in adjacent bodies of water. » Reduces pesticide drift from adjacent fields. » Provides wildlife habitat.
Erosion Control		Using no-till/strip-till, cover crop, grassed waterways, grade stabilization, water and sediment control basins, etc.	» Protects soil from runoff and concentrated flow. » Keeps soil healthy and productive. » Prevents sediment from entering into streams.
Soil Health Mgmt Systems		Combining no-till, cover crops, nutrient management and buffers as a system each crop year.	» Increases soil organic matter. » Traps and cycles nutrients. » Improves water infiltration and water holding capacity.
Irrigation Mgmt Systems		Managing the amount and timing of irrigation.	» Saves water and energy. » Maximizes plant water uptake. » Reduces irrigation-induced erosion.

For more information visit: www.in.nrcs.usda.gov

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