

# Cover Crop Economics Decision Support Tool

As cover crops gain attention and focus, questions are moving from the agronomic to the economic. A spreadsheet based partial budgeting tool is available to help address some of the economic and financial questions that arise.

This tool is designed to help producers, landowners, planners and others make informed decisions when considering adding cover crops to their production system.



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The Tool is available for download from the following locations:

NRCS MO Soil Health Website:  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mo/soils/health>

NRCS Illinois eFOTG Section V > Costs and Economic Tools:  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg\\_locator.aspx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx)

### General Notes on the Tool:

- ⇒ The tool is built as a partial budget analysis tool. A partial budget only captures the costs and benefits that are expected due to a change in the operation.
- ⇒ An instruction page is provided within the tool. Please review the instructions to understand the inputs required by the user and the results the tool provides.
- ⇒ The analysis depends upon user supplied values. Where a user is unsure of the exact variables, use the tool to run “what if” scenarios based on different potential ranges on inputs. The model will store and retrieve up to 5 default scenarios to provide a starting point for running the model.
- ⇒ Analysis results are provided both numerically and graphically.
- ⇒ A References & Citations page is included in the tool which provides users with additional technical and scientific detail utilized to build the tool.

### Some Variables Included in the Model:

#### Costs:

Cover Crop Establishment and Management  
Yield Decrease



#### Short Term Benefits:

Direct Nutrient Credit  
Herbicide/insecticide/fungicide input reduction  
Yield Increase  
Reduced Erosion  
Grazing, Baling, Seed Production

#### Long Term Benefits:

Overall Soil Fertility Improvement  
Water Storage Benefit (Increased infiltration)

Results are presented showing immediate short run net benefits and long run net benefits (up to 50 years). The long term benefits assess the impact of improved soil health with continued use of cover crops.

*Example from the tool of a graphical display of the financial results of a scenario assessing 25 years of incorporating cover crops into a corn/soybean rotation where 10 years are required to change soil organic matter 1% (display shows the change in operating costs; negative numbers represent increased operating cost)*

