

**Conservation Technology** Information Center

# 2025 Conservation in Action Tour PLANTING OPPORTUNITY, GROWING SUCCESS

# SIQUX FALLS, SQUTH DAKOTA, MAY 6-7











and and

# **Proudly supporting America's farmers.**



Learn more at Syngenta-US.com

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#### SCAN THIS QR CODE TO FILL OUT OUR 2025 FEEDBACK SURVEY

# GREETINGS

#### EMBRACING THE DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES. IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES

As Chair of the CTIC Board, I am thrilled to extend a warm welcome to you as we gather for the 18th annual CTIC Conservation in Action Tour. This year, our focus is on planting opportunities for growing success – an essential and timely topic as we focus on soil health, biodiversity, crop production, and innovation in the Great Plains.

More than a decade ago, I worked alongside South Dakota farmers to increase market access and optimize crop yields through collaborative research with soybean farmers and South Dakota State University. This state feels like my second home. Together, we will explore the conservation efforts taking root in this region and beyond, as we seek to inspire positive change and foster a more inclusive future for conservation.

From CTIC's humble beginnings advocating for no-till practices to our current position as a leading voice in conservation agriculture, our commitment to innovation and progress remains unwavering. Surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of South Dakota's agricultural landscape, we remember the significance of our mission—to promote conservation practices that enhance soil health, water quality, and economic prosperity for all.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the CTIC staff for their tireless dedication in organizing this exceptional program. Their passion and hard work have made this tour possible, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions.

Thank you once again for joining us on this journey of exploration and discovery. Together, let us embrace the diversity of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that enrich our collective efforts in conservation.

Warm regards,

Adam Herges, The Mosaic Company

CTIC BOARD CHAIR



#### **CONVENING STAKEHOLDERS TO CHAMPION CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE**

True to the reputation we've built over the last 17 years, this year's Conservation in Action Tour program showcases real-world perspectives from farmers as the heart and soul of the tour, celebrating their great stewardship and innovations and highlighting the challenges they face in making their operations more profitable and productive. This marks my third tour as Executive Director and I'm thankful for the foundation others have built and my team and our generous sponsors that allow this event to continue.

As a leading convener of diverse agriculture and conservation organizations for 43 years, CTIC is proud of this platform. The Tour reflects our mission and purpose as the conduit between farmers and all sectors of the food and agriculture value chain that support them. I'm excited to help bring the tour to the Great Plains and Prairie Pothole Region for the first time, where my conservation career started nearly 30 years ago. The rich soils, wide-open spaces, and abundant wildlife make this landscape truly remarkable.

It takes all of us to advance conservation agriculture. As our guests, members and partners, you are the lifeblood of the tour. I'm thankful to all of you for investing your time this week to learn and share, expand your networks, and celebrate the work being done with an eye on continued progress and collaboration. Please do not hesitate to share your ideas for topics and locations to showcase in the future, and be sure to attend the closing reception to hear where we're heading for the 2026 tour.

You'll see other examples of how our work links farmers with supporting organizations in this publication. Our new Conservation Connector (Page 44) provides a platform for incentive program administrators and service providers to connect with farmers at the local level to bring clarity and efficiency for today's unprecedented levels of support from public and private sectors. Our work to deliver the Farmers for Soil Health program in three states (Page 45), including South Dakota, gives us firsthand experience delivering conservation at the kitchen table level.

This is an exciting time to be involved in conservation agriculture and an exciting time of the year to be hosting the tour during the heart of planting season! Our four decades of work wouldn't be possible without our member companies, sponsors for this Tour, and partners around the country. A special thanks to our farmer and tour stop hosts that went above and beyond during an incredibly busy time of year.

Yours in conservation,

yan Heiniger,

**Executive Director** CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CENTER





**Conservation Technology** Information Center

# **Connect. Inform. Champion.**

#### **MEMBERSHIP 2025**

Working together to secure our soils, protect water resources, and enrich habitats.



#### It Takes All of Us

#### **Conservation Technology Information Center**

(CTIC) is proud to be one of the most respected and long established conservation organizations in the United States. We provide technical assistance for the country's farmers and ranchers, awareness and research for policymakers, and a platform for agriculture corporations, NGOs and other organizations to work toward the common goal of advancing resilient and productive agriculture systems.

We're all in this together at a time when boots-onthe-ground technical assistance, farmer-to-farmer learning and risk mitigation for new management practices have been identified as the clear pathways to broader adoption of conservation management. Your support helps break down these barriers and accelerates coalition-led progress.

#### NEW FOR 2025 100k Challenge Grant

Join or upgrade your membership this year to **double your impact**.

Thanks to the generous support of the Walton Family Foundation, new funding will be matched on a 1:1 basis up to \$50,000. Your membership upgrade or new membership will unlock additional support to amplify the reach and resources that CTIC deploys in the world.

There has never been a better time to support positive conservation outcomes: clean water, stable soils, improved habitat and more resilient working lands for producers and their communities. Meet the Challenge by becoming a new member or upgrading your existing membership today.

"The value proposition for Mosaic is about outcomes and impact. CTIC can put people on the ground to help work with farmers to help implement conservation approaches to ensure crop inputs stay in the field and are leveraged for food production and not enriching our environment. CTIC has a proven track record, and that allows us to talk about how we're impacting agricultural communities where we sell products."— ADAM HERGES, CTIC Board Chair, The Mosaic Company

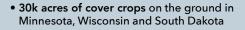


#### Investments with **Grassroots Impact**

#### We're Moving the Needle

#### FY 2024 achievements

• More than 2,000 farmer leaders engaged with in-person information and technical assistance at field days, workshops, farmer events and 1:1 guidance



- Cover Crop Coach program to support farmer-to-farmer networks and peer learning
- 50k farmers reached with CTIC messaging and advocacy for cover crop programs
- 12+ webinars, podcasts and articles on third-party platforms and media



• OpTIS: Monitoring progress on cover crop adoption and grassland health is critical for researchers, policymakers and member companies

#### Looking ahead to 2025

- Farmer Field Days and Cover Crop Coaches: 10+ field days, farm tours, shop talks and community events to help farmers and allied industry realize the potential of conservation management and the role of technical advisory. A great way for member companies to connect and engage with farmers and technical experts
- 18th Annual Conservation in Action Tour: South Dakota, 2025
- First National Cover Crop Survey of Trusted Advisors to help the industry understand how technical providers influence tillage and cover crop strategies
- CTIC Conservation Connector rollout: Aligning farmers with technical assistance to demystify conservation programs at the local level
- Farmers for Soil Health: Targeting 80k acres of cover crop enrollments in Minnesota, Wisconsin and South Dakota
- Diverse Corn Belt: Amplifying successes of diversified cropping systems as communications partner in threestate area

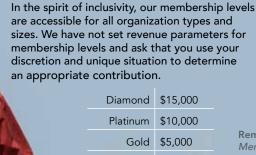


#### Be part of coalition-led change at the farm level

Silver \$1,500

Bronze Copper \$250

\$750



Scan to Join Today

Reminder: Membership upgrades and new membership contributions qualify for matching funds this year

#### Thank you to our 2024 members!

The Mosaic Company Syngenta PLATINUM MEMBERS Nutrien Corteva Agriscience Indigo Ag The Fertilizer Institute Agri Drain Corp. Agriculture Retailers Assn.

American Soybean Assn. Cotton Incorporated CropLife America **Ducks Unlimited** Farm Credit Services of America Illinois Corn Growers Assn. Lessiter Media National Assn. of **Conservation Districts** National Corn Growers Assn. Precision Risk Management Princeton University Library The Nature Conservancy

Fractal Agriculture Houston Engineering NC State University Truax Company USDA-ARS-NLAE



Conservation Technology Information Center ctic.org





# ITINERARY — —

Twesday, May 6, 2025
12:30 P.M. TO 4:30 P.M.   BIOFUELS DEEP DIVE POET Headquarters and Chancellor Plant
5:30-9:30 P.M.   ANNUAL BANQUET ICON Event Hall, Sioux Falls
Wednesday, May 7, 2025
7:30 A.M.   BUSES DEPART FROM HOLIDAY INN CITY CENTRE Sioux Falls
8:00 – 9:30 A.M.   SATELLITE DATA FOR LANDSCAPE-LEVEL PLANNING U.S. Geological Survey Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center, Sioux Falls
9:45 – 11:00 A.M.   <b>PROFITABILITY AND CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT</b> Ryan and Christina Larson Farm, Garretson
11:15 - 12:30 P.M.   LUNCH AND REAL TALK: STATE OF THE SOIL Morton Center, Baltic
1:15 - 3:30 P.M.   DIVERSE ROTATIONS, COVER CROPS, AND LIVESTOCK Kurt and Kathy Stiefvater Farm, Salem
<b>4:30 - 5:15 P.M.</b>   <b>THE INTERSECTION OF URBAN AREAS &amp; AGRICULTURE</b> Falls Park, Sioux Falls
5:30 - 7:30 P.M.   CLOSING RECEPTION Holiday Inn City Centre, Sioux Falls

### We are proud to partner with CTIC!

There are many ways to finance sustainability. We have the expertise to help find the way that works for you.

We are committed to working with our customers and industry to be agriculture's most valued financial partner in sustainability.

Learn more about our impact in our 2024 sustainability report.



Farm Credit Services of America

Scan for our 2024 Sustainability Report, or visit fcsamerica.com/about/agricultural-sustainability.



## Welcome TO SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota is a place of wide-open spaces, variety in the weather bringing both joy and challenges, and connections to the land and its wildlife. Distinct geographies split by the Missouri River ("East River" and "West River") include grasslands, croplands, forests, hills, lakes, and wildlife refuges. Prairie dogs, mountain lions, and ring-necked pheasants — the state bird — are just a few of the wildlife species found here.

South Dakota ranks first in the nation for buffalo and second for honey production, with 13.3 million pounds of honey produced in 2024. Almost 30% of farms are more than 1,000 acres. From 2012-2022, the number of farms decreased from 31,989 to 28,299, a 12% decrease in farms.

In 2024, South Dakota farmers planted:

### 5.9 MILLION ACRES OF CORN 5.45 MILLION ACRES OF SOYBEANS 1.5 MILLION ACRES OF WHEAT

At harvest, corn yielded an average of 164 bushels per acre, while soybeans yielded 43 bushels per acre. Wheat yielded on average 56.6 bushels per acre.

In livestock numbers, more than 3.5 million cattle and calves, 2.8 million turkeys, and 2.2 million hogs were inventoried in 2024.



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS helps America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners conserve soil, water, air, and other natural resources while ensuring the land's productivity.

To learn more about NRCS, please visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov



### NRCS

#### YEARS HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND – Since 1935 –

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



#### South Dakota: PLANTING OPPORTUNITY, GROWING SUCCESS

South Dakota farmers are leaving the land better than they found it for the next generation. Kurt Stiefvater, one of our farmer hosts for the Conservation in Action Tour, says protecting soils and landscapes is essential to preserving the nation's resources for the future.

"The agriculture industry of the future needs to change our mindset to conservation first and not second or third when we operate our farms," Stiefvater says. "We have to break the thought process of, 'we have always done it this way.""

Challenges like a decrease in markets that support diverse agricultural enterprises can provide barriers to becoming involved in agriculture. Stiefvater says increasing agricultural diversity can encourage youth to become involved in production agriculture.

"Crop and livestock diversity gives opportunities for different conservation management and income streams to support a viable operation," Stiefvater says.

Part of the key to success in agriculture is collaborating through partnerships. Terry Sohl, one of our speakers at the U.S. Geological Survey's Earth Resources Observation and Science Center, says there's a role to play for private, government, and non-governmental organizations.

"We're most successful when those entities work together," Sohl says. "Things start to break down when those relationships become more adversarial rather than cooperative."

CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE, DIVERSITY, AND COLLABORATION ALL PLAY A PART IN PLANTING OPPORTUNITY & GROWING SUCCESS IN SOUTH DAKOTA. WE'RE GLAD YOU'VE JOINED US!

# POET TOUR & BANQUET-BIOFUELS DEEP DIVE

About 40% of U.S. corn is used in biofuel production, making it a critical contributor to U.S. agriculture and producers around the country. We've partnered with POET for a comprehensive look at the biofuels industry, its role in American agriculture, its importance to the country's producers, and the industry's work toward zero-carbon biofuel products. This excursion includes a behind-the-scenes tour of a processing facility that features alternative energy sources, bringing POET closer to its goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

A hard hat will be provided, and closed-toed shoes are required.

#### LEARN MORE ABOUT POET'S SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES



#### 12:30 - 2:00 P.M. | GLOBAL BRIEFING ON THE FUTURE OF BIOFUELS

- Jeff Broin, Founder and CEO, POET
- Doug Berven, Vice President of Corporate Affairs, POET
- Walt Bones, S.D. Farmer and Former S.D. Secretary of Agriculture (2011-2013)
- *Dr. David Clay*, Editor-in-Chief American Society of Agronomy, Distinguished Professor of Soil Biogeochemistry, and the SD Corn Endowed Chair in Precision Farming at South Dakota State University

#### 2:00 - 4:00 P.M. | POET CHANCELLOR PLANT WALKING TOUR

- Tom Pierson, General Manager, POET
- Josh Peterson, Environmental Services Manager, City of Sioux Falls

### **BIOFUELS PRESENTERS**



#### Jeff Broin FOUNDER AND CEO, POET

Jeff Broin is the founder and CEO of POET, the world's largest biofuel producer. He is a recognized innovator, entrepreneur, agriculturalist, philanthropist, and advocate for the biofuels industry. For nearly four decades, Broin has worked to advance the role of renewable biofuels and bioproducts in addressing national and global issues surrounding agriculture, human health, and sustainability.

Broin holds a firm, longstanding belief that our world can grow much of what it needs from the surface of the Earth. That mission has grown the biofuels and bioproducts sector – generating demand for America's farmers, stimulating worldwide economic growth, and positioning agriculture to be a leading solution for many of our world's most pressing needs.



#### Doing Berven vice president of corporate affairs, poet

Doug Berven joined POET in March 2003 and has served the organization in several key roles since then. In his current role as Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Berven promotes the corporate objectives of POET, the importance of agriculture, and the benefits of biofuels domestically and internationally. Berven currently sits on the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance Executive Committee and Board, the Fuels Institute Advisory Board, is a Senior Advisor

to Solutions From the Land, and serves on several other industry associated work groups, committees and associations.

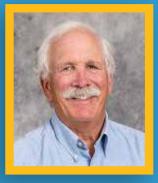


#### Walt Bones RETIRED FARMER AND FORMER SOUTH DAKOTA SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

Walt Bones' farm is a crop, beef, and dairy operation with a focus on conservation and environmental stewardship. As the fourth generation farming on the family homestead northeast of Parker, Walt and his family have implemented windbreaks, buffer strips, and habitat for pollinators and songbirds. From 2011-2013, he took a two-and-a-half-year sabbatical from the farm to serve as state Secretary of Agriculture for Governor Dennis Daugaard. Active in his community, Walt has served as a leader

in organizations like the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, the South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership Program, and the South Dakota Farm Bureau.

### **BIOFUELS PRESENTERS**



#### Dr. David E. Clay Editor in chief American society of Agronomy, distinguished professor of soil biogeochemistry, and the sd corn endowed chair in precision farming at south dakota state university, south dakota state university

Dr. David E. Clay's research goal is to develop and test sustainable precision agricultural management systems that enhance environmental quality, maintain rural economies, and improve energy and economic self-sufficiency. He has twice received the ASA Precision Systems Impact Award, and he also

has been recognized twice as the SDSU College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences Outstanding Researcher. Dr. Clay also serves as Editor-in-Chief for the American Society of Agronomy. In addition, he is an editor or author for 13 books and has published over 250 papers.



#### Tom Pierson General Manager, poet Bioprocessing - Chancellor

Tom Pierson is the General Manager of POET Bioprocessing - Chancellor. He is responsible for accomplishing the company's production goals, ensuring the plant operates in a safe, efficient, and profitable manner, and for maintaining all business operations of the bioprocessing facility. He started at POET in 2020 as a Commodity Manager. Prior to joining POET, Pierson worked for Cargill primarily in the areas of animal nutrition and health. He lives near Centerville, South Dakota, on a small farm where he and his wife Sherri raise Shorthorn cattle. They have 3 grown children and one grandson.

#### Josh Peterson Environmental services manager at the city of sloux falls

Josh Peterson is Environmental Services Manager for the City of Sioux Falls. He is part of a team that leads environmental management and municipal operations, including the Sioux Falls Regional Sanitary Landfill that captures methane to help power POET's Chancellor plant. The Environmental Division also works to educate Sioux Falls on environmental matters through its Leading Green Initiative, and it partners with SDSU for the Big Sioux Stewardship Summit, which features agriculture tours and programming for the community.

# A Celebration of CONSERVATION AGRICUTURE SPONSORED BY POET

#### 5:30 P.M. TO 9:30 P.M. | ANNUAL BANQUET

Join us for a celebration of conservation agriculture featuring locally sourced foods and distinctive South Dakota cuisine. We'll welcome attendees and feature a keynote speaker at the Icon Event Hall, just a few blocks from the host hotel. You won't want to miss this opportunity to network and learn about innovation in South Dakota at a fantastic venue.

**RAINFALL SIMULATUR** ON PATIO WITH NRCS

- Ghane Jordan, Resource Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Eric Barsness, Conservation Agronomist, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Douglas Fiedler, Conservation Agronomist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

#### **CONSERVATION CONNECTOR:** CONNECTING PRODUCERS WITH LOCAL PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

- Leif Fixen, North American Agriculture Strategy Manager, The Nature Conservancy
- Drew Kessler, Senior Scientist, Houston Engineering

#### FARMERS FOR SOIL HEALTH: TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR FARMER-LED ADOPTION

- Teagan Duffy, Wisconsin Soil Health Specialist
- Justin Jelsma, South Dakota Soil Health Specialist

#### WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

- Mary Gutton Carruthers, Stewardship Manager at Syngenta & CTIC Board Member
- Ryan Heiniger, Executive Director, Conservation Technology Information Center
- David Ress, Trustee & Executive Committee, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe

#### **EVENING PROGRAM**

#### **PRESENTATION OF COLORS & NATIONAL ANTHEM**

• Adam Herges, Sustainability Agronomist Advisor at The Mosaic Company & CTIC Board Chair

#### LOCALLY LED CONSERVATION

• Angela Ehlers, Executive Director, South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts

#### **GLOBAL VISION FOR BIOFHELS INDUSTRY**

· Doug Berven, VP Corporate Affairs, POET

### **BANQUET PRESENTERS**

#### David Ross TRUSTEE, FLANDREAU SANTEE SIDUX TRIBE

Dr. David E. Clay's research goal is to develop and test sustainable precision agricultural management systems that enhance environmental quality, maintain rural economies, and improve energy and economic self-sufficiency. He has twice received the ASA Precision Systems Impact Award, and he also has been recognized twice as the SDSU College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences Outstanding Researcher. Dr. Clay also serves as Editor-in-Chief for the American Society of Agronomy. In addition, he is an editor or author for 13 books and has published over 250 papers.



#### Angela Chlers executive director, south dakota association of conservation districts

Angela Ehlers was raised on a farm and ranch near Presho, South Dakota, between Lower Brule Reservation and Ft. Pierre National Grasslands. Spending her early days working alongside her dad, she now works alongside her three sisters to sustain the family legacy on the land. A graduate of South Dakota State University in commercial economics and agribusiness, Angela has served as executive director for SDACD for more than 35 years. She is active in her community, serving as an EMT for 48 years. She has received the National Association of Conservation Districts

Professional Service Award and Service to Conservation Award.



#### Doing Berven vice president of corporate affairs, poet

Doug Berven joined POET in March 2003 and has served the organization in several key roles since then. In his current role as Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Berven promotes the corporate objectives of POET, the importance of agriculture, and the benefits of biofuels domestically and internationally. Berven currently sits on the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance Executive Committee and Board, the Fuels Institute Advisory Board, is a Senior Advisor to Solutions From the Land, and serves on several other industry associated work groups, committees and associations.

#### *Reynote* **FLYING IN THE FACE OF FEAR** COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK TO ELEVATE PERFORMANCE

Leveraging her extensive experience as a fighter pilot and senior military leader, Kim unveils powerful insights into the mindset and culture that enable fighter pilots to sustain peak performance and make decisive choices under pressure. Packed with actionable strategies from the cockpit, this keynote invites you to explore a unique perspective on leading with courage, equipping you to inspire bold action and elevate performance.



Kim "KC" Campbell Kim "KC" Campbell is a retired Colonel who served in the United

Kim "KC" Campbell is a retired Colonel who served in the United States Air Force for over 24 years as a fighter pilot and senior military leader. She has flown 1,800 hours in the A-10 Warthog, including more than 100 combat missions protecting troops on the ground in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2003, Kim was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for Heroism after successfully recovering her battle-damaged airplane after an intense close air support mission.

As a senior military leader, Kim has led hundreds of airmen both at home and abroad in deployed locations and enabled them to succeed in their missions. She has experience leading complex organizations and driving cultural change. Kim knows what it takes to be a successful leader, to inspire and empower highperforming teams to achieve success.

Kim is a distinguished graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. As a Marshall Scholar, she earned an MBA from the University of London and a Master of Arts in International Security Studies from the University of Reading in England.

Kim's Air Force assignments include leadership roles as a Group Commander, responsible for over 1,000 Air Force personnel in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. She also served as the Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, advising the number three civilian official in the Department of Defense on national security and defense policy formulation. Kim has also served as the Air Force Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, a pre-eminent think tank promoting international leadership and engagement. Most recently, she served as the Director of the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the Air Force Academy.

Kim is now a keynote speaker and executive coach with Victory Strategies, a leadership development and coaching firm. She is the author of the bestselling book, *Flying in the Face of Fear: A Fighter Pilot's Lessons on Leading with Courage*.

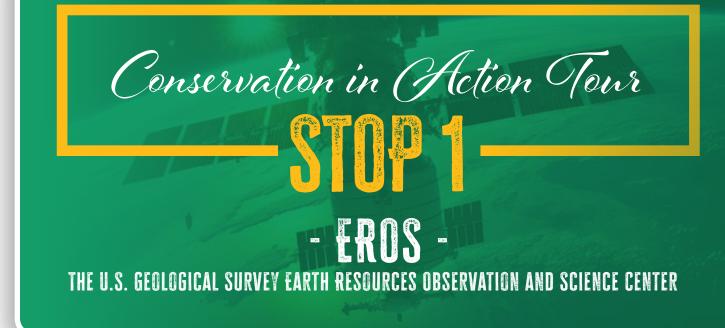


### f X O in @mosaiccompany

# Committed to Nutrient Stewardship.

At Mosaic, we think about sustainability broadly. We seek innovative, science-based solutions to help feed a growing population, while conserving natural resources. Together with partners, we are committed to advancing 4R Nutrient Stewardship—right nutrient source, right rate, right time, right place as a sustainable agriculture best management practice.

We proudly support CTIC.





### DATA AND TOOLS TO INFORM DECISIONS FOR CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

The U.S. Geological Survey Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center, founded in 1972, has been keeping an eye on land for more than 50 years. Located just north of Sioux Falls, SD, it operates the Landsat satellites and manages one of the largest archives of satellite imagery in the world. These images offer an unmatched view of how landscapes and cities across the U.S. and around the world are changing.

Watertown

Huron

### Conservation in Action Tour STOP 1

EROS maintains more than 50 years of satellite imagery that provide information on how places have changed over time. With millions of images totaling 74 petabytes of data (it would take half a million iPhones to store all of this data), this massive archive helps track historical and current land-use and land-cover change. Scientists use this long-term Landsat record to produce the Annual National Land Cover Database (NLCD), which provides detailed, year-by-year information on how land cover is changing across the U.S.

Landsat data was recently recognized as one of the top four sources of information in the "2023 Earth Observation Assessment Report-Agriculture & Forestry." Among space-based sensors, airborne sources, field work, and other reference data, Landsat stood out for its role in enhancing food supply, boosting productivity while conserving ecosystems, improving resilience after disasters, and supporting regulations and data-driven decision making.

Analyzing landscape change also can reveal potential future changes in water quality and land use. Many federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), rely on EROS and the Landsat archive to carry out their work.

For example, EROS has worked with the City of Minneapolis and the EPA to study how the city and surrounding landscapes are changing and how the city's water quality might change along with them. With more agricultural and developed lands in the region, more sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus were entering the Mississippi River, the main water source for Minneapolis.

By modeling how landcover might change in the future, EROS helped show the potential of rising nitrate levels in the Mississippi River. This gave the City of Minneapolis time to prepare for nitrate removal through its water treatment system. Connecting changes in the landscape with changes in the river helped the City of Minneapolis make informed choices about conservation and ensure future water quality for its residents.

Beyond agriculture, EROS' remote sensing work also helps emergency responders prepare for hazards and respond to disasters. Efforts include monitoring fires in Yellowstone National Park, supporting cleanup efforts for oil spills, and assessing damage by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown. EROS also has been involved in the U.S. Agency for International Development Famine Early Warning System in West Africa.

EROS also supports landscape-scale conservation and resilience. Landsat imagery helps track drought conditions and changing water availability, providing critical data for managing irrigation. EROS also monitors rangeland health and the spread of invasive grasses, information that supports sustainable grazing and habitat conservation. After wildfires, EROS data are used to assess burn severity and monitor regrowth, guiding restoration efforts that protect soils, watersheds, and ecosystems. This type of insight helps land managers make smart decisions to keep working lands healthy and productive into the future.



### **EROS PRESENTER**



#### Terry Gohl supervisory physical scientist, u.s. geological survey at uses eros

Terry serves as Chief of the Integrated Science and Applications Branch at USGS EROS. Terry began his career at USGS EROS in 1993. He helped develop the first National Land Cover Database (NLCD) using Landsat imagery. With a funded NASA proposal in 2005, Terry initiated EROS research and development of a land-change modeling capability, developing the Forecasting Scenarios of Land Use (FORE-SCE) framework to model both historical and future land use for time periods when remote sensing data are not available. As an active birder, Terry loves visiting the grasslands of central and western South Dakota, as well as the wide-open Badlands. He says he often has the space (and the birds) all to himself.



Dr. Heath Hagy

#### SUPERVISORY WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Dr. Heath Hagy currently serves as the Project Leader of the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team. Previously, Heath served as the Regional Waterfowl Ecologist for the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System in the Southeast Region from 2017 to 2023. From 2012 to 2017, Heath was the Director of the Illinois Natural History Survey's Forbes Biological Station at the University of Illinois located on Chautauqua NWR. Heath grew up in southwestern Oklahoma on a family farm and is an avid outdoorsman who loves to hunt and fish with his two Labrador retrievers in tow. Heath, his wife Erin, and son Max reside in Bismarck, ND.



SEE THE EROS IMAGE OF THE WEEK, PODCAST, MORE HISTORICAL INFORMATION, AND STATE MOSAICS LIKE THE ONE OF SOUTH DAKOTA YOU SEE HERE.

# NON NON DUCKS DUCKS UNLIMITED CONSERVED

Thanks to our supporters, Ducks Unlimited has reached a new milestone. To join our mission of waterfowl habitat conservation, visit us online today.



ducks.org



### THE ECONOMIC DECISIONS OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

HOSTS: Ryan & Christina Larson

When Ryan Larson began farming in 2013, he started farming the only way he knew: with tillage in a traditional system.

Ryan was a new farmer. He had the know-how growing up on a dairy farm, but his parents had divested their dairy farming operation in the 1990s. There was no equipment and no infrastructure to help him get started. He was renting their land and starting from scratch.

"I wasn't making any money, and I didn't like what I was doing," Ryan says. "I realized I needed to be more efficient than everyone else because I didn't have generational wealth and felt like I was behind other farmers."



After five years using old, underpowered equipment and experiencing soil erosion, Ryan says he was open to trying new things. He found his way to an NRCS meeting. Ryan says NRCS was instrumental in helping him identify and understand opportunities to innovate. He was introduced to no-till planting, cover crop strategies and other soil health practices that could help him add efficiency, cut some costs, and ultimately allow a holistic system to develop.

He began conducting no-till trials, comparing how crops planted with no-till fared against crops planted with tillage. He also started interseeding cover crops into corn.

### Conservation in Action Tour STOP 2

"I started managing my land as one system with no-till, cover crops and livestock, and everything changed," Ryan says. "You could probably trade your high-horse tractor and all your tillage equipment and buy a no-till set-up and still have money left over. You don't need a four-wheel drive; you don't need three pieces of tillage equipment."

Now, Ryan and his wife, Christina, manage about 1,000 acres in a no-till and strip-till system combined with diverse rotations that include small grains, cover crops, and integrated livestock. Aside from saving on big iron purchases and diversifying their revenue by contract planting, the Larsons monitor their field-level profitability with FINBIN. The University of Minnesota project includes databases of aggregated financial reports to help farms conduct enterprise profitability analyses on management practices, focusing on Cover Crop Profitability Analysis.

"There is so much benefit to oats, to the small grains with the soil health gains and yield enhancements," Ryan says. The Larsons also use white winter wheat and rye as covers that allow their livestock to graze. The cover crops provide notable weed suppression, too, especially with marestail. "Overall, weed control after covers is like a night-and-day difference from not having a small grain [in rotation]."



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### LARSON FARM PRESENTERS





Tony Sunseri has served in a variety of roles for NRCS across the country, including Area Conservationist, District Conservationist, and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations. With over 20 years of experience in conservation leadership, he has led major initiatives in tribal engagement, program delivery, workforce development, and strategic planning. Under his leadership, South Dakota NRCS has exceeded financial assistance goals, expanded outreach, created new tools, and launched innovative leadership training programs for staff. Tony holds dual degrees

in Rangeland Ecology/Management and Crop Management from Oregon State University. A native of Oregon, Tony's passion for agriculture started on a Boy Scout ranch and his family's hay farm. He now lives in Huron, SD, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Sara, woodworking, and drone photography.



#### Cristin Weber DATA STRATEGY MANAGER, PRECISION RISK MANAGEMENT

Cristin Weber specializes in precision mapping and crop insurance solutions that boost farm profitability and reduce risk. With a degree in Agricultural Business from South Dakota State University and over 15 years in the ag industry, Cristin is passionate about innovating uses for precision ag data to strengthen APH (Actual Production History) and improve the bottom line. Her goal is simple: help farmers turn their data into dollars by improving risk management strategies and maximizing

profitability per acre. She and her husband live this passion on their own farm and have seen firsthand the benefits of diversifying crops, refining land use, and using data to guide every decision.



#### Anthony Bly soils field specialist, south dakota state university extension

Anthony Bly works with crop producers and agronomists to solve soil issues through educational activities developed from unbiased soil and crop research. Anthony's knowledge areas include soil fertility, testing, and health factors related to resource management and crop productivity. Previously, Anthony was employed by the SDSU Plant Science Department as a Research and Extension Associate from 1992 to 2011. Between 2011 and 2013, Anthony provided technical expertise to launch a soil testing

lab located in Sioux Falls, SD (AgLab Express). Anthony holds a BS ('88) and MS ('92) degrees in Agronomy from SDSU. Anthony is thankful for the many influential mentors he has worked with at SDSU and tries to exemplify their teachings and examples in his work and life.

# Growing a Sustainable Future

We're working with farmers, ranchers, policymakers and other partners to implement regenerative ag practices that enhance soil health, improve water quality and support a future where people and nature thrive together.

nature.org/workinglands



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# LUNCH PROGRAM at The Morton Center

#### 11:10 A.M. to 12:30 P.M

• INTRODUCTIONS: Dr. A.J. Kumar, Vice President of Sustainability Sciences, Indigo Agriculture & CTIC Board Member

- SOUTH DAKOTA PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM Kevin Robling, Secretary, Game, Fish & Parks
- UPDATE ON STATE CONSERVATION EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES Governor Larry Rhoden
- FEATURED PANEL DISCUSSION: REAL TALK ON THE STATE OF SOIL CONSERVATION
  - Moderated by Mike Lessiter, President of Lessiter Media and Chair of the Conservation Agriculture Foundation, both of which are CTIC members
  - Brian Hefty, CEO, Hefty Seed Company and 4th generation farmer
  - Brian Chatham, Manager of Agronomy, Ducks Unlimited and farmer
  - Carrie Wollmer-Ganders, President of Field to Market & 6th generation Indiana Farmer

### LUNCH PROGRAM KEYNOTE



Governor Larry Rhoden, **GOVERNOR, SOUTH DAKO** 

Governor, Larry Rhoden is a lifelong West River rancher, a dedicated husband and father, and a proven leader with a record of service for South Dakota. He serves as the 34th Governor of South Dakota. Larry was elected as lieutenant governor alongside Governor Kristi Noem in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. He rose to the office of governor in January 2025. After graduating high school, he joined the South Dakota National Guard, serving six years and carrying on a family legacy of

military service that began in the Revolutionary War. In 2000, Larry was elected to the state legislature. Larry served as House Majority Leader and chaired both the Senate and House State Affairs Committees. He served as Interim Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Agriculture from May 2020 to September 2020 and as South Dakota's Agriculture Ambassador from 2020 to 2025. He has also served as a past President of State Ag and Rural Leaders. Larry still does custom welding and operates the ranch where he was born and raised.

### LUNCH PROGRAM PRESENTERS



#### Kevin Robling, SECRETARY, SOUTH DAKOTA GAME, FISH & PARKS

Kevin strives to make a positive difference for current and future generations each and every day. He received his bachelor's and master's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from South Dakota State University and began his career with the South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks department in 2011. He was first hired on as a resource biologist in Sioux Falls and was promoted to a big game biologist in 2012 out of Rapid City. In 2017, he transitioned into a statewide leadership role working directly under the Department Secretary. In this position he

focused on strategic change initiatives - working with the GFP Commission and the state Legislature - to enhance recreational opportunities and simplify regulations to continuously reduce barriers to outdoor participation in South Dakota.



#### Mike Lessiter president, lessiter media and chair, conservation agriculture foundation

Mike Lessiter, a second-generation ag journalist, has been Editor/ Publisher of *Farm Equipment* since 2004. He has covered business-tobusiness operations, manufacturing, and marketing topics since 1992 and has held various roles with the Farm Equipment Manufacturers Assn. and the Assn. of Equipment Manufacturers. Mike is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was named president of Lessiter Media in 2007.



#### Brian Chatham MANAGER OF AGRONOMY, DUCKS UNLIMITED'S GREAT PLAINS REGION

Brian Chatham works with Ducks Unlimited's teams in the great plains to develop and promote their ag programs and provide advice to producers on agronomic practices. Prior to DU, Brian was a large rowcrop farm manager in Nebraska, North Dakota, and Montana. He is extremely passionate about agriculture and all that farvming entails. Brian also ran his own farm in the mountains of North Carolina, as well as custom farming/harvesting across the Southeastern U.S. Brian grew

up in the mountains of North Carolina on his grandfather's tobacco and beef cattle farms. His love of the outdoors drove him to an education and career where he can focus on ag and wildlife.

### LUNCH PROGRAM PRESENTERS



Brian Hefty CEO, NEFTY SEED COMPANY

Brian Hefty, along with his brother, Darren, are fourth-generation farmers and agronomists who are focused on how to help you increase yields, make more money on the farm, and leave the land and environment in better condition for future generations. They are the hosts of Ag PhD TV, the number one agronomy show in the U.S., which has aired a brand-new episode every week for more than 25 years. Brian and Darren also host the number one agronomy radio show, Ag PhD Radio, which has aired on

SiriusXM for over 10 years. Brian manages Hefty Seed Company with his brother, as well, which is the 8th largest ag chem retailer and the 8th largest seed retailer in the U.S.



#### Carrie Vollmer-Ganders PRESIDENT OF FIELD TO MARKET & 6" GENERATION INDIANA FARMER

Carrie Vollmer-Sanders serves as Field to Market's President. Carrie is a 6th generation farmer, passionate about collaborating with forwardthinking farmers, convening diverse thought leaders, and addressing environmental challenges while maintaining focus on business objectives. She received the White House Champion of Change Award in 2014 for her leadership in developing the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program while at The Nature Conservancy. She has an MBA from Purdue University and a master's degree in Ag Economics from Michigan State University. Carrie currently serves on the Edon Farmers Co-op board. She

previously served on the US EPA Science Advisory Board and worked for U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action, The Nature Conservancy, and Michigan Farm Bureau.

### **FROM INVESTMENT**

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1 ROI: Kaiser, H.M. 2024. An Economic Analysis of the United Soybean Board and Qualified State Soybean Boards' Demand- and Supply-Enhancing Programs. Cornell University. © 2025 United Soybean Board



### STACKING CONSERVATION PRACTICES INTO A REGENERATIVE SYSTEM

The Stiefvater family of Salem is rooted in agriculture. A fourthgeneration farmer, Kurt purchased the farm from his parents in the 1990s. A fifth-generation farmer, Kathy also teaches fifth grade. Their daughters plan to continue their parents' work as they study agriculture and remain active in the farm's operations.

The Stiefvaters integrate a cow-calf operation into 1,800 acres of oats, corn, soybeans, alfalfa and sorghum. The crops are grown in a no-till system that has been in place for 25 years. Cover crops after small grains provide livestock feed, minimizing the hay needed for cattle. For the last 30 years, cows have calved in May and June to mimic nature.



### Conservation in Action Tour STOP 3

"I spend a lot of time thinking about soil. It's the base of the farm and the go-to engine source for generating the livelihood around here," Kurt says.

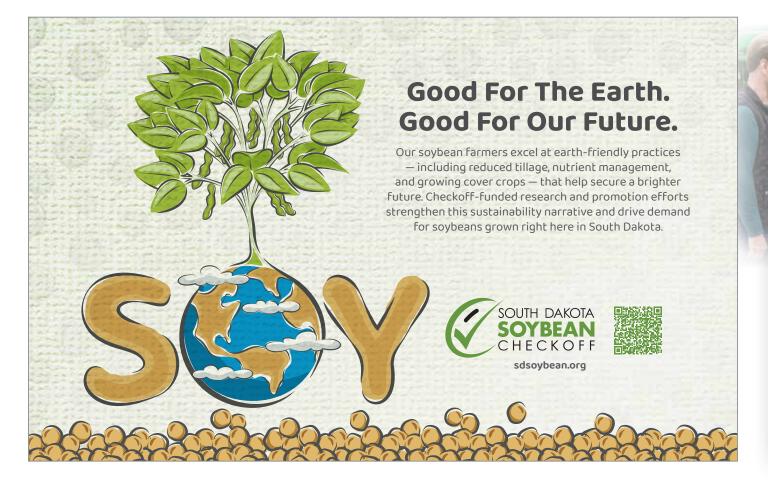
Water conservation is critical in the area, as rainfall is a limiting resource. Kurt says that no-till and cover crops help manage the water.

Kurt and his dad also implemented narrow row spacing, decreasing from 38 inches to 19 inches. This decrease saved moisture and developed a canopy more quickly for weed control. Once they'd seen those results, row spacing was increased to 22 inches to use equipment that was more readily available.

"We don't have the wind erosion of the soil, either, throughout the wintertime," Kurt says. "There's more residue there, and we save our topsoil that way." Kurt says no-till saves fuel and time, and the number of tractor hours and equipment repair bills are reduced. He also sees plant health and soil benefits with no-till. One year, even with limited rainfall, the Stiefvaters still saw a record oats crop of 130 bushels per acre.

Kurt is interested in synergy between crops and says the operation's resiliency is helped by "the interconnection of the different crops and the livestock and implementing and keeping a crop on the soil year-round and keeping it alive." Since 1988, the Stiefvaters also have seen the organic matter levels in their soils double.

Black Angus, Red Angus, and Simmental cattle graze cover crops during the winter. Kurt says he's seen a 40% reduction in the amount of hay he needs. The cover crops are benefited by the



manure spread throughout the field, and cows receive exercise while they're raising their calves or preparing for new calves to arrive in the spring.

Because they have built that resiliency, the Stiefvaters received the American Soybean Association's Conservation Legacy Award for the Upper Midwest Region in March. The family also was named South Dakota FFA Foundation Family of the Year in 2024.

Kathy says they are looking toward the future as they farm.

"Here at home, it's important that we leave the land better for the next generation and take care of it the best we can while it's in our possession."



### STIEFVATER FARM PRESENTERS



Cindy Zenk

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTH DAKOTA Soil Health Coalition

Cindy Zenk works with producers to leave their operations better than when they began. Along with the nine-member board of farmers and ranchers that leads the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition, Cindy

promotes improved soil health for agricultural sustainability and productive soil that keeps South Dakota families farming. Along with her husband, Fred, she shares the importance of agriculture with her family and others by promoting agronomy, land, and range judging to 4-H and FFA students and providing workshops, field days, and test plots.



Brock Hanten

#### INSURANCE OFFICER, FARM CREDIT SERVICES OF AMERICA

Brock Hanten helps growers manage risk and find solutions tailored to their operation. Growing up on a family farm, he developed a deep appreciation for the challenges and opportunities in modern agriculture.

With a background in agricultural economics and technology, he is passionate about the intersection of finance, sustainability, and innovation in farming. As a member of the FCSA's sustainability committee, Brock works to educate growers on emerging trends, enable climate-smart practices through specialized programs, and collaborate with industry partners to drive new opportunities in sustainable agriculture. Building a Sustainable Future from the Ground Up!



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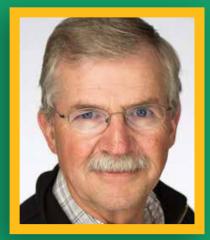


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## STIEFVATER FARM PRESENTERS



#### *Fire Clendenin* soil health technician, south dakota soil health coalition

Jim Clendenin takes care of and preserves the soil for the next generation, a focus present through his entire career. After graduating from South Dakota State University, Jim founded a high school agriculture program in Morris, Minnesota. While there, a local farmer introduced Jim to ridge till. In 1982, Jim began instructing agriculture courses at Lake Area Technical Institute. He also started an Agronomic Demonstration Center. Managing this farm helped Jim learn about good soil health practices. He then shared this information with his students, the next generation. He taught soils until his retirement from teaching in 2018.



(Austin Carlson SOIL HEALTH TECHNICIAN, SOUTH **DAKOTA SOIL HEALTH COALITION** 

Austin Carlson developed his deep passion for agriculture on his family's farm near Garretson. He majored in agriculture systems technology and minored in agriculture business at South Dakota State University. Along with his wife, Baylee, he maintains an active role on his family's farm. implementing soil health principles to positively transform the farm. He sees a great need to improve the soils our world depends on and continually learns and shares knowledge that can help rejuvenate the soils across South Dakota and beyond.



#### Baylee Lukonen soil health technician, south dakota soil health coalition

Baylee Lukonen grew up on a Hankinson, North Dakota, farm, where she raised Shorthorn cattle with her family. She's shown cattle at all levels, including nationally. Baylee studied agronomy at Southwest Minnesota State University and interned with Agnition (Ralco Nutrition) and Ducks Unlimited. In college, Baylee discovered that regenerative agriculture was not a focus in the university, and she created a goal to learn as much as possible outside her formal studies. Baylee is based at the Watertown USDA-NRCS office and raises Shorthorn cattle with her husband, Grant.



At Falls Park just north of downtown Sioux Falls, everything that we've seen on this Conservation in Action Tour is connected: the eastern South Dakota landscape, the satellite imagery that observes changes in that landscape, and the conservation practices that keep soil and nutrients on the farm.

Here, the Big Sioux River, which flows through the landscape in which we've just traveled, crashes over Sioux Quartzite Rock. The rock's density makes it resistant to erosion by the average of 7,400 gallons of water that flow across the rock every second.

Both the water and the rock are important natural resources to the area. The river offers many recreational opportunities and provides drinking water. Surface water is even purified through reverse osmosis and pumped into the water collection tank at a local brewing company to make Big Sioux Brew beer (you'll be able to taste some at our closing reception!).

Pioneers used Sioux Quartzite as a building and paving material, and it's currently used as an aggregate in concrete construction. The Queen Bee Mill, a historical landmark at Falls Park, was quarried on site and built of Sioux Quartzite. The state-of-the-art mill could process 1,500 bushels of grain per day.



SEE PHOTOS OF The BIG Sioux Brew Creation Process



# FALLS PARK PRESENTERS



#### Genator Líz Larson South dakota schator, district 10

Senator Liz Larson has more than 20 years of experience in project management and policy advising in the United States and abroad. Her experiences with nonprofits and social enterprises include Oxfam America, Mercy Corps, and the United Nations. Liz worked on posttsunami economic recovery in Indonesia, agricultural Extension and community finance in Cambodia, microfinance in India

and Nepal, and inclusive financial services in the Pacific Islands. She caught her first walleye in Big Stone Lake in the 1980's and has been reeling in fish– or hunting and hiking– ever since.

#### Jay Gilbertson manager, east bakota water development district

Jay was named Friend of the Big Sioux River in 2017. The longtime head of East Dakota Water Development District was instrumental in establishing nitrate testing on the Big Sioux River and has supported efforts to slow pollution into one of its tributaries, Skunk Creek.





Rachel Kloos water/wastewater group leader, ISG

Rachel has an unmatched understanding of the regulations required to improve and design water/wastewater facilities. Rachel leads ISG's Water/Wastewater Group, a role that combines her passion for sustainability with her natural leadership skills. She holds two patents for water recycling in biofuel facilities and profoundly understands industrial and

municipal water/wastewater regulations, standards, and compliance.



#### 5:30 - 7:30 P.M. | CLOSING RECEPTION

Unwind at the host hotel with newfound friends and old ones after an immersive day on-farm and behind the scenes that will keep your work recharged for months to come. Our closing reception will feature the 2025 CTIC Hall of Fame induction ceremony and recognition of the people and organizations that are moving conservation agriculture forward.

#### **INTRODUCTIONS**

• Dr. Leanna Nigon, Director of Research and Agronomy at The Fertilizer Institute & CTIC Board Member

UPDATE ON SOY CHECKOFF INITIATIVES FROM THE UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD

• Ed Lammers, USB Board Director and farmer

**90 YEARS OF CONSERVATION** 

Louis (Aspey, Associate Chief, NRCS)

RVAN HEINIGER HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE RECOGNITION

• Dr. Dwayne Beck

· David Brandt (posthumously) David's award will be accepted by his son, Jay, and his daughter, Amy Brock.

**2026 TOUR ANNOUNCEMENT** 

7:30 P.M. ADJOURN (DINNER ON YOUR OWN)







W Field to Market The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture

MEASURE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WITH THE FIELDPRINT PLATFORM



Track progress on eight environmental metrics and identify opportunities for improvement.

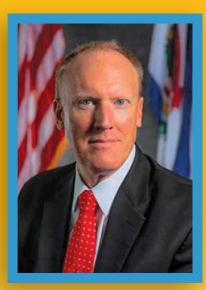
Launching Summer 2025: Fieldprint Platform Version 5.0 featuring a new quantitative soil carbon metric and enhanced GHG emission and energy use metrics.

## **CLOSING RECEPTION PRESENTERS**



#### Ed Lammers United Sovbean board director and farmer

Lammers is from Hartington, Nebraska, and grows soybeans, corn, alfalfa, and rye. He also raises 200 stock cow beef and buys 500 head of calves to finish along with his home-raised calves. Ed farms with his son, and his goal is to be profitable while transitioning his son into full ownership. This is Ed's ninth year on the United Soybean Board. He currently serves on the Executive Committee and is the Supply Action Team Lead. In addition to his role on USB, Ed is involved in the U.S. Meat Export Federation and Nebraska Soybean Board, is a director on Cedar Knox Public Power Board, and past president of his parish council.



#### Lowis Aspey ASSOCIATE CHIEF, USUA-MACS

Louis Aspey brings experience from a distinguished 34-year career spanning multiple leadership roles at NRCS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Prior to his work at NRCS National Headquarters, Louis served as the State Conservationist for West Virginia. In this role, he and his team addressed significant challenges, including large-scale flooding, water supply issues, and food resiliency concerns. A proud native of southwestern Pennsylvania, Louis was the first in his family to attend and graduate college. He earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and a master's degree in public administration from American University in Washington, D.C.

# 2025 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Innovators, trailblazers, mentors, and visionaries in conservation agriculture are integral to who we are at CTIC. Without these leaders, we wouldn't be where we are.

Therefore, it is fitting that at our flagship event, the Conservation in Action Tour, we pause to recognize those who have laid a foundation for CTIC and conservation agriculture. We are proud to honor these leaders with their induction into the CTIC Hall of Fame.

#### Dr. Dwayne Beck ACTING MANAGER, DAKOTA LAKES RESEARCH FARM

Dwayne Beck is renowned for his pioneering work developing no-till agriculture and sustainable farming systems. After receiving a Ph.D. in Agronomy from South Dakota State University in 1983, Dr. Beck managed the James Valley Research Center near Redfield, SD, and then became the manager of Dakota Lakes Research Farm (DLRF) when it launched in 1990. He served as Research Manager until his retirement in February 2022 and became Acting Manager again in March 2025.



At DLRF, Dr. Beck has focused on developing no-till systems for both irrigated and dryland areas, emphasizing the critical role of crop rotation in minimizing weed, disease, and insect issues while enhancing profitability. Under his leadership, the 1,320-acre farm has been entirely managed using no-till techniques since its inception. Dr. Beck's innovative approach has significantly influenced agricultural practices, particularly in the Great Plains and prairie by enabling producers to adopt no-till techniques profitably. His work has been instrumental in promoting soil health and sustainable farming practices across various ecosystems.

Dr. Beck has been a frequent speaker at agriculture conferences, both domestically and abroad, and he is a sought-after expert voice for various media outlets. Dr. Beck has also consulted internationally on conservation agriculture projects and is respected for his unflinching assessment of the damage being done to the soil by conventional agricultural practices.

Dr. Beck's extensive research and advocacy in no-till farming and sustainable agriculture have substantially advanced CTIC's mission. By developing and promoting practices that improve soil health, water quality, and agricultural sustainability, Dr. Beck's work aligns closely with CTIC's goals. His efforts have provided valuable insights and practical solutions that support conservation practices nationwide while prioritizing profitability for farmers.

#### David Brandt (awarded posthumously) FARMER, BRANDT FAMILY FARM

David Brandt, a pioneering farmer from Carroll,

Ohio, was a nationally recognized leader in no-till farming, cover crops, and soil health advocacy. His steadfast commitment to preventing soil loss led him to champion no-till farming and cover crops as essential tools for preserving and enhancing soil health. His legacy continues to inspire the agricultural community following his passing on May 21, 2023, due to an automobile accident.

Brandt began practicing no-till in 1971 and quickly became a sought-after expert in regenerative agriculture, frequently sharing his knowledge at conferences and workshops across the country. His interest in conservation stemmed from the challenges of farming highly erodible soils. For 30 years, he played a vital role in the Ohio No-Till Council, serving as president for 14 of those years.

Nationally, Brandt was affectionately known as the "Godfather of Soil Health" for his generosity in mentoring fellow farmers and advancing conservation practices. He was a frequent speaker at agricultural conferences, hosted field days on his farm, and partnered with Ohio State University's Piketon Research Facility to advance soil health research. He also contributed to the Ohio Student Career Experience Program, helping cultivate the next generation of conservation-minded farmers. His impact was recognized with his induction into the Ohio Ag Council's Hall of Fame in 2024.

David Brandt embodied CTIC's mission of farmer-led advocacy and empowerment that influenced three generations. He was instrumental in driving the widespread adoption of conservation farming practices with countless farmers one-on-one, and he collaborated with the Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS to train new employees nationwide. His farm served as a USDA-ARS demonstration site for water quality monitoring, showcasing significant reductions in sediment and nutrient runoff thanks to continuous no-till and cover crop systems.





#### **Conservation Technology** Information Center

CT



## **CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CENTER**

CTIC promotes, supports, and provides information on conservation technologies and sustainable agricultural systems.

CTIC members are connected to a community of people from government, agribusiness, supply chains, retail channels and farmers around the country who are committed to practical and productive conservation farming systems.

#### **CTIC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**



# CTIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS - 2025

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Adam Herges - CTIC Chair; Sustainable Agronomy Advisor, The Mosaic Company

Tim Palmer - CTIC Vice Chair; Farmer, National Association of Conservation Districts

Kellis Moss - CTIC Treasurer; Managing Director of Federal Affairs, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Mark Gchmidt - CTIC Past Chair; Associate Vice Chancellor, North Carolina State University

#### **BOARD MEMBERS**

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Michelle Hummel, Director of Industry and Stakeholder Relations, American Soybean Association

Patricia Rice, Technical Stewardship Manager, BASF

Brooks Coetzee, Biologicals Business Partner, Corteva Agriscience

Ryan Kurtz, VP Ag and Environmental Research, Cotton Incorporated

Katie Gtump, Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs and Sustainability, CropLife America

AA Kumar, VP of Sustainability Sciences, Indigo Agriculture, Inc.

Lara Bryant, Associate Director, International Certified Crop Advisers Program

Mark McConnell, Assistant Professor of Upland Birds, Mississippi State University

Rachel Orf, Director of Environmental Stewardship, National Corn Growers Association

Martie Templeton, Manager Sustainable Ag, East Region, Nutrien

Tommy Jones, Chief Strategy Officer, Precision Risk Management

Heidi Peterson, VP of Agriculture Research and Conservation, Sand County Foundation

Mary Gutton Carruthers, Stewardship Manager, Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC

Leanna Migon, Director of Agronomy and Research, The Fertilizer Institute

Mary Jales, Soil Health and Nutrients Program Director, The Nature Conservancy

#### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

Aeremy Peters, CEO, National Association of Conservation Districts

Ryan Heiniger, Executive Director, Conservation Technology Information Center



READ MORE ABOUT OUR WORK IN THE NEXT FEW PAGES, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT BECOMING PART OF OUR COMMUNITY ON OUR MEMBERSHIP PAGE

# **DIVERSE CORN BELT PROJECT**



AN AI-GENERATED ROW CROP LANDSCAPE IS THE FOCUS OF LIVELY CONVERSATION AT AN INDIANA REIMAGINING AGRICULTURAL Diversity (RAD) team meeting. Participants were asked to view several types of AI-generated landscapes and provide Feedback on the positives and challenges of producing agricultural products in that landscape.

#### STUDYING THE REAL-WORLD IMPACTS OF DIVERSIFIED FARMING SYSTEMS

CTIC leads the Communications Team for the Diverse Corn Belt Project (DCB), a five-year, multidisciplinary project exploring opportunities beyond corn and soybeans and investigating the real-world impacts of diversified farming systems, including:

- More options for crop rotations
- Perennial crops for forage or bioenergy
- Grazing livestock
- Agroforestry
- Horticultural crops

With more than 30 research partners from land grant institutions, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations, the DCB team seeks to understand agronomic, economic, social, infrastructure, and policy changes that could make agricultural diversification viable.

The DCB Team conducts research, Extension, and modeling in Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. Farmers, agribusiness representatives, policy makers, educators, and other stakeholders have contributed to DCB.

#### **RESEARCH ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**

- Focus groups, in which producers raising a variety of crops and livestock gather to discuss the challenges and opportunities of agricultural diversification;
- In-field research, allowing agronomists, entomologists, hydrologists, and soil scientists to study farmers' existing management systems
- Visioning sessions where producers, agricultural advisors, community leaders, and others share insights, explore policy implications, and envision what the Midwestern agricultural landscape can look like in the future.

The DCB Blog at <u>diversecombelt.org</u> provides an indepth look at each component of the project. Also on the website, learn more about DCB's vision and find resources focused on finding markets, managing risks, implementing new farm practices, and securing healthy communities.

DCB is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture through an Agriculture and Food Research Initiative competitive grant.

# CONSERVATION CONNECTOR-

We're working to bring clarity and accessibility to conservation programs by creating a one-stop-shop for farmers, ranchers and advisers. The CTIC Conservation Connector is bringing conservation programs and local technical assistance to producers in a single platform.

There's nothing else like it: Public, private and nonprofit programs and technical assistance all under one tent.

The Conservation Connector database allows users to search programs by crop, conservation practice, and geography, allowing producers to find local programs that fit their operation, and more importantly, connect with local contacts for technical support and guidance to help them be successful.

## YOU CAN RAISE THE VISIBILITY OF YOUR PROGRAMS BY CREATING A FREE LISTING IN THE SELF-SERVICE PORTAL HERE.

Your participation will help build trust and clarity in conservation agriculture by allowing farmers to easily find, understand and evaluate programs and services in one place.

JOIN 200+ PROGRAMS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS TODAY

( CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS )





## LOCAL PROGRAMS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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Help farmers find your program and service offerings as they navigate the unprecedented opportunities available to them today. It takes all of us working together to achieve our shared goal of helping producers understand, value and adopt more resilient production systems.

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

CALIFORNIA E. STANISLAUS RCD: **Jeff Borum** | CORTEVA/ICCA BOARD: **Andy Knepp** FARM CREDIT SERVICES OF AMERICA: **Myriah Johnson** | FIELD TO MARKET: **Paul Hishmeh** IOWA SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION: **Roger Wolf** | NACD: **Tim Palmer** NRCS MINNESOTA: **Troy Daniell** | NUTRIEN: **Sally Flis** | PASA (PENNSYLVANIA): **Jeanne Lurvey** 

# FARMERS FOR SOIL HEALTH PROGRAM



#### DOUBLING COVER CROP ACRES IN THE U.S. BY 2030

Farmers for Soil Health (FSH) is a collaboration between the National Corn Growers Association, National Pork Board, and United Soybean Board to create a farmer-led cover crop program. A 20-state initiative, FSH focuses on expanding cover crop acres to 30 million across the United States. The program is led by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

#### OUR ROLE

CTIC plays a vital role in this program by providing outreach, signups, and technical assistance to farmers in **South Dakota**, **Minnesota**, and **Wisconsin**. We understand the unique needs of each operation and support farmers in adopting or expanding their use of cover crops.

#### **OUR COMMITMENT**

Our goal is clear: to enroll **500 farmers** representing **137,000 acres** into the FSH program. We are committed to empowering farmers to make sustainable choices that benefit both their operations and the environment.

#### **SOIL HEALTH SPECIALISTS**



Justin Jelsma South Dakota



FARMER-TO-FARMER NETWORKS

Peer networks are critical to farmer engagement. Producers are more inclined to consider management practices that have been successful for other operations that resemble theirs in similar geographies. Thanks to a generous grant from General Mills, CTIC has cultivated a Cover Crop Coach program to help farmers navigate the complexities of cover crop selection, planting, and management, tailoring solutions to each farmer's specific needs and circumstances.



#### **OUR COVER CROP COACHES:**



SEE OUR PROGRESS
36,000 enrolled acres
25% + to goal
90 enrolled farmers

**375+** field visits and direct contact with interested farmers

# 2025 NATIONAL COVER CROP SURVEY

#### NEW SURVEY OF FARM ADVISORS SHOWS GROWING INTEREST IN COVER CROPS

More than 650 farm advisors from across the U.S. participated in a survey on cover crops, shining light on how—and how frequently—they advise growers on cover crops. The 2025 National Cover Crop Report was published in April by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program, and the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA). This is the eighth national cover crop survey conducted by those groups since 2012 and the first to focus on advisors. The American Soybean Association also contributed to this report.

"Advisors play a key role in informing farmers about cover crops and providing technical assistance to help them succeed with covers," pointed out Dr. Rob Myers, director of the University of Missouri Center for Regenerative Agriculture and regional director of extension programs for North Central Region SARE. "Understanding their attitudes toward cover crops, how they get their information, and how they perceive cover crop benefits will help guide efforts to support those advisors."

Ryan Heiniger, executive director of the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), added, "This survey opened a window into how cover crops fit into crop consulting businesses and other advisory services. We also observed that seeing is believing, which is borne out by the fact that approximately 70 percent of the respondents who farm themselves use cover crops on their own operations, and those cover crop users are more inclined to advise their clients on the practice."

ASTA President and CEO, Andy LaVigne, emphasized the importance of the perspectives gained from these surveys in empowering the seed industry to respond to the needs of U.S. farmers.





FOR A COPY OF THE CTIC/SARE/ASTA National Cover Crop Survey Report 2024-2025, VISIT CTIC'S WEBSITE.



Conservation Technology



american seed trade association

"As part of the agriculture and food sector based on innovation, better understanding trends and motivations for planting cover crops enables the seed industry to improve cover crop varieties and use new technologies in the areas most impactful to American agriculture. Recognizing and adapting to the needs and desires of farmers allows the seed industry to adequately prepare, and ultimately provide, the right seed for the right farm at the right time," he said.

The survey was conducted online in October 2024. The combination of private and public sector advisors represented 46 states. Of the 654 advisors who participated in the survey, 77% were Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs), a certification conferred by the American Society of Agronomy.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY



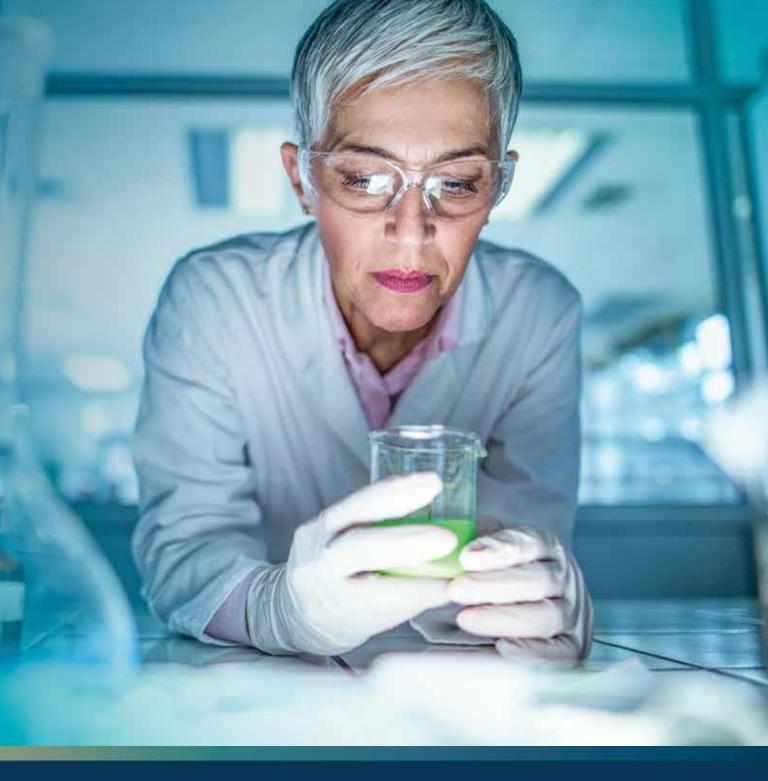
#### AMONG THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SURVEY FINDINGS:

- The advisors who used cover crops on their own farms were five times more likely to recommend cover crops to farmers not yet using them compared to advisors who did not farm with cover crops themselves.
- The farm advisors surveyed used a wide range of information sources to learn about cover crops. Advisors who reported that they learned about cover crops onthe-job rather than through formal academic or training channels preferred training sessions (63.9 percent) and webinars (57.4 percent) for learning new cover crop insights but also liked learning from farmers one-on-one (58.3 percent) and visiting field trials (30.6 percent).
- Looking ahead, a majority of the farm advisors (56.9 percent) expected to see cover crop acreage continue to increase. They also expected farmers to continue increasing use of cover crop mixes (46.7 percent) and trying ways of combining other soil health practices with cover crops (52.9 percent). The advisors expected a moderate amount of interest in newer cover crop topics like planting green (29.2 percent), grazing cover crops (32.2 percent), and others.





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