



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2023

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USDA Collaborates with AGree and the University of Illinois on Agriculture Data Pilot

Pilot Results Show Promise of Cover Crop and No-Till Practices in Six Key States

Webinar today, March 2 at 2pm ET to discuss results

Washington, DC -- In an exciting public-private partnership, the United States Department of Agriculture worked with Meridian Institute's AGree Initiative and the University of Illinois to evaluate conservation and crop insurance data in six states (IA, IL, IN, MN, MO, and SD) affected by extremely wet spring weather in 2019. The unusual weather that year prevented planting on 19.6 million acres and the cost to taxpayers for crop insurance on those prevented plant acres was \$4.2 billion. The pilot project sought to understand how cover crop and no-till practices, particularly when used for multiple years, impact whether a field was declared "prevented plant" for 2019.

Today, AGree will host a webinar to discuss the results of the pilot with Bill Northey, Chief Executive Officer of the Agribusiness Association of Iowa and former USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation; Dr. Rob Myers, Director of the Center for Regenerative Agriculture at University of Missouri; and Dr. Bruce Sherrick, Director of the TIAA Center for Farmland Research at University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign. The conversation will be moderated by Deborah Atwood, AGree Senior Advisor.

The project had a seminal finding on the positive impact of conservation practices for reducing crop production risk. Across the 6-state region, consistent use of cover crops and no-till/reduced-till resulted in a 24% reduction in the odds ratio of prevent-plant loss in 2019.

"In collaboration with USDA and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, we were able to analyze data in a safe, effective way to provide insights farmers can use to improve their practices and bottom lines," said Todd Barker, CEO of Meridian Institute, which houses AGree.

"Our country relies on American farmers. Thanks to the leadership of Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Thune (R-SD), we were able to responsibly analyze USDA data to demonstrate that cover-cropping and no-till practices can help farmers manage their risk to extreme weather."

"Farming is bipartisan; it is all about economic and environmental sustainability driven by pragmatic decisions. As a farmer, I am always striving to be a good steward of the land, while running a profitable farming operation," said Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Owner and Partner, Highland Family Farms, MN. "We are very appreciative of the Senate leadership, the USDA and the academic partners who have collaborated on this important research and analysis; what we learn from this pilot report will help farmers better track how the choices we make on the farm can benefit our bottom line and our land."

This important research project would not have been possible without the efforts of several staff from multiple agencies at USDA. Dr. Bruce Sherrick from the University of Illinois led the team to collect, assess, organize, and evaluate data from relevant sources at USDA and the private sector. Dr. Rob Myers from the University of Missouri provided conservation expertise on the research and has led efforts to communicate the research results.

The research team also identified key recommendations and opportunities for USDA to improve its data collection. Recommendations include: determining an effective method for collecting annual cover crop and no-till usage data on a field-by-field basis; gathering more consistent, relevant data at the geographic unit and reporting with the same geographic identifiers; pursue standardization and synchronization of time stamps for reported crop management practices and results in terms of yields; and more. For the full list of recommendations, read the report [here](#).

WHO:

- Bill Northey, Chief Executive Officer of the Agribusiness Association of Iowa and former USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation
- Dr. Rob Myers, Director of the Center for Regenerative Agriculture at University of Missouri
- Dr. Bruce Sherrick, Director of the TIAA Center for Farmland Research at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Deborah Atwood, AGree Strategic Advisor and Meridian Institute Senior Fellow.

WHAT: Join AGree for an analysis of the just-released pilot results.

WHEN: Thursday, March 2, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. ET

RSVP: [Zoom Webinar Registration](#)

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About The AGree Initiative

The AGree Initiative includes the AGree Economic and Environmental Risk Coalition (AGree E2 Coalition) and the AGree Climate, Food, and Ag Dialogue (CFAD) both housed at the Meridian Institute. AGree focuses on developing innovative and scalable policies and pilot programs that support farmers in improving agronomic and environmental outcomes while adapting to weather variability. AGree partners believe there are real opportunities to use federal agricultural policy to incentivize and scale agricultural practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve soil health, and enhance water quality while reducing farmer costs and improving profitability.