



Green Lands
Blue Waters

Using NRCS programs for CLC farming Haase Farm - Blue Earth, MN

October 2020

Scott Haase farms 1,400 acres of no-till soybeans

Scott also farms strip-tilled corn and cover crops in the rich soils near Blue Earth, Minnesota. From a conventional corn-soybean crop rotation, he is transitioning to a farming system that uses regenerative practices including continuous living cover. Rather than focus on yield, his priority is on farm profitability.



Scott Haase

Photo credit: Scott Haase

Cover Crops

For the last five years Scott has been growing cover crops on his corn ground. He interseeds cover crops in June when the corn is around a foot tall at the V4 stage. He utilized a multi-species mix that includes annual ryegrass, buckwheat, clovers, and brassicas.

Scott gets a better response from annual rye than when he tried cereal rye in his system, which does not do as well in the shade of corn. He looks to his local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) professional for advice on cover crops, and he utilizes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to support trying these practices on his land.

No-till soybeans and strip-till corn with cover crops reduce inputs, tillage passes, time, and energy use on the farm while helping build structure and carbon in the soil.

He sees the soil starting to handle heavy rains better, due to the improved infiltration of water. Trafficability has also improved.



Interseeded
cover crops
in corn

Photo credit:
Crystal Waters
Project

Perennial Buffer

Using the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Scott has established a perennial buffer using native grasses, hazelnuts, and elderberry plantings to provide important plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and soil protection on his farm.

Peer-to-Peer Support

One of Scott's objectives is to develop a regenerative community with other like-minded farmers. He welcomes farmers to his farm and has hosted several field days to emphasize the regenerative practices he is using, including strip-till, no-till, and cover crops. In addition to hosting his own field days, Scott participates in other field days, podcasts, and meetings to learn from soil health experts like Gabe Brown and those with NRCS, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and Sustainable Farming Association.



Field Day

Photo credit: Charlie Hurd

Future Plans

Going forward, Scott would like to expand his continuous living cover practices by integrating livestock into his operation. He previously integrated livestock through the Pasture Project program. He plans to explore EQIP options for fencing to help him add livestock into his operation to graze corn stubble and cover crops. He is also interested in contracting to raise sweet corn or peas to integrate them into his rotation, following such crops with cover crops and/or grazing. The opportunity to extend out the corn - soybean rotation with a third crop, such as alfalfa or a small grain, is also on his list.

Positive Impacts

During the five years Scott has been using these practices on his farm, he has noticed improved soil structure, increased soil organic matter, and better water infiltration. Once the soil is functioning closer to the way nature intended, fertilizer, seed treatments, fungicides, and herbicides can be reduced or possibly even eliminated.

Author: Linda Meschke, President and Founder, Rural Advantage

Contact: linda.ruraladvantage@gmail.com, <http://ruraladvantage.org>

Linda Meschke has over 35 years of experience in working on agricultural and water resource issues in south central Minnesota. Her work has been focused on projects that improve rural communities and the implementation of a variety of conservation practices and getting changes on the landscape to improve water quality. She is currently working on landscape diversification of the intense corn and soybean region in south central Minnesota to integrate more perennials or 3rd Crops and develop agriculture-related entrepreneurial enterprises.

Green Lands Blue Waters is a vision for productive, profitable agriculture in the Upper Midwest based on the straightforward concept of getting as much value as possible from farmlands by growing crops that keep the soil covered year-round—what we call farming with Continuous Living Cover. The values from the crops we promote can be measured in yields and farm profits, but also as reduced risk, improved outlook for long-term productivity from the soil, more jobs, more wildlife, cleaner water, and resiliency in the face of a changing climate.

glbw@umn.edu | 612-625-3709 | www.greenlandsbluewaters.org