

## SPOTLIGHT - Breslin Farms<sup>4</sup>

Molly Breslin has 80 acres in production on a 100-acre farm in Ottawa, Illinois. She and her father, John, started the farm 11 years ago on land that has been in Molly's family for generations. To take advantage of the flat central Illinois land and existing equipment, they began with row crops - but moved beyond the typical way of doing business in central IL. The farm is certified organic, and grows yellow and heirloom corn; soybeans; dry beans; sunflowers; small grains including wheat, rye, and oats; and cover crops.

Molly has been sole proprietor for several years and now has a toddler and another job, all of which has made her think about why she farms: "Is it to steward the land for the future or to maintain the farm as a business with yield and profit as the main aim?"

The second job gives her the flexibility to consider taking some of her land out of cash-crop production and cover cropping it, as an investment - in long-term soil building.

Additionally, she says the coronavirus pandemic, "Illuminated that systemic, government-led organization of and support for things like child care, health care, and education is absolutely essential" to the future of farming. "If we want more people – and especially more women – in farming, which is essentially a risky gamble of an industry, we need to address some of the huge barriers to entry and ensure farmer stability."

Whether in farming or anything else, she says, "We shouldn't have to take out enormous personal loans to start a business. Wealth gaps created and exacerbated by decades of structural discrimination mean that many people can't get in at all. Addressing these systemic issues is essential for people doing all kinds of work. Without that, as a nation, we are less resilient in the face of any kind of crisis."



*Credit: Molly Breslin*