

# SPOTLIGHT - Illinois Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program

More and more states are investing in soil health through incentive programs. After neighboring Iowa rolled out a successful cover crop insurance program in 2019, Illinois soil health advocates worked with the governor and legislature to pass a similar measure. The Illinois Fall Covers for Spring Savings (FCSS) program, started in 2020, gives farmers a \$5/acre discount on their crop insurance premiums for every acre they plant to cover crops. The program took off: in its second year, it was fully enrolled within 24 hours. Requested acres rose by more than one-third from 2020 to 2021, from 113,000 to 185,000 acres, with 70% of applicants new to planting cover crops.



*Credit: Anne Queenan*

Advocates pushed again for an expansion of FCSS for the 2022 season, concerned that people will give up on the idea of cover crops if they can't get into the program. While applicants requested 185,000 acres in the program's second year, there was only funding for 50,000 acres. On June 1, 2021, the Illinois General Assembly approved a state budget that increased the Partners for Conservation Fund and doubled FCSS to 100,000 acres.<sup>24</sup>

Midwesterners know the one-mile-square grids of the countryside. One of those grid sections (actually called a *section*), contains 640 acres. If you were to drive a 40-mile stretch of road, seeing the sections on both sides planted to cover crops, you would have seen 50,000 acres. That's about the distance of Chicago, top to bottom. Even jumping up to 200,000 acres only covers 160 miles of sections. That's cover crops on one trip from the bottom to top of Iowa. To cover the whole state, you'd need 150 trips. Only 149 more trips to cover...



*Credit: Russ Gesch*