Survey of Cover Crop Management in Nebraska

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Cover crops (CC) have increased in popularity across the United States. In an effort to evaluate current CC management strategies adopted in Nebraska, a survey was conducted during the 2017 Cover Crop Conference (February 14, 2017), held at the Eastern Nebraska Research and Extension Center, Ithaca, NE. A total of 82 growers and agronomists, representing 28 counties (mainly from eastern Nebraska), completed the surveys. A total of 87% of total participants adopt cover crops as part of their cropping systems. A total of 369,005 acres were represented in this survey, with 59,892 acres planted to cover crops. CC seeding time and methods, species selection, termination and herbicide programs, impact on the production system, and challenges were the main data collected. The main method of establishing cover crops following soybeans and field corn were drilling and aerial seeding, respectively. Cereal rye appeared to be the most adopted cover crop species (either alone or in a mix). Over 95% of respondents utilize herbicides for CC termination in the spring. Moreover, of those 95%, 100% utilize glyphosate, with 65% utilizing a second mode of action in the tank mix. According to respondents, the top reported benefits of incorporating CC into a production system were reduced soil erosion and weed suppression. The biggest challenge reported by CC adopters was planting and establishing a decent stand before winter. According to the results of this survey, there are different management strategies, positive outcomes, and challenges that accompany CC adoption in Nebraska. These results will help producers, agronomists, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln better guide CC adoption and research needs in the state.