



# Farmer Profile Library



Summer 2015  
Continuous Living Cover Series

*photo: Cates Farm, Richard Cates*

## Cover Crop farmer profiles

### Cover crops in small grains

Carmen Fernholz – Cover crops: Carmen has been using cover crops on his Madison, MN farm for almost 30 years. Most of his covers are used in conjunction with small grain management. All of his small grains which include wheat, oats, barley, flax and dried field peas are all underseeded with either a red clover or an alfalfa. These underseedings are then used as covers late into the fall or as cash forage crops for ensuing years. Alfalfa as a three year perennial and cash crop also is a big part of his crop rotation system.

[http://www.mccc.msu.edu/states/MN\\_farmers.html#CarmenFernholz](http://www.mccc.msu.edu/states/MN_farmers.html#CarmenFernholz)

### Cover crops in corn/soybean

Jerry and Nancy Ackermann farm – Cover Crops: ~1050 acres of corn, soybeans and alfalfa in Lakefield, MN. Purple-topped turnips, cover crop radish and cereal rye cover crops on standing corn and soybeans. Farm is being studied by Andy Nesseth, of Extended Ag Service in Lakefield.

<http://www.agweek.com/event/article/id/22104/>

<http://www.pipestonestar.com/Stories/Story.cfm?SID=13986>

Dan DeSutter – Cover crops: Dan grows continuous, no-till corn on his 4,300 acres near Attica, IN. In the 10 years he has been growing cereal rye, oilseed

radish, and crimson clover as cover crops, his organic matter has increased 2%.  
<http://magissues.farmprogress.com/MOR/MR01Jan12/mor031.pdf>

Tim Smith – Cover Crops: Eagle Grove, IA farmer Tim Smith honored by the National Corn Growers Association as the inaugural recipient of its Good Steward Recognition Program  
<http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/pressreleases/the-nature-conservancy-congratulates-iowa-farmer-tim-smith-for-winning-natio.xml>

Danny & Kevin Harms –Cover Crops: The Harms family farms about 3,250 acres in Livingston, McLean and Ford counties, Illinois. They had a dairy operation until 2007 and now focus on corn and soybeans. “We wanted something to pull nutrients up from deep down and bring them closer to the surface,” said Danny. With its thick, fibrous roots, annual ryegrass does that and more, helping with compaction, water infiltration and nitrogen sequestration.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelprdb1083051>

[http://www.heartlandoutdoors.com/malone/story/partnership\\_equals\\_successful\\_watershed\\_project/](http://www.heartlandoutdoors.com/malone/story/partnership_equals_successful_watershed_project/)

Daniel Steidinger – Cover Crops: Daniel read about cover crops and decided to give them a try on his Illinois farm. He planted radishes to increase water infiltration where water used to run across the field. The deep roots of the radish aerated the area enough to pull water further down into the soil profile. Daniel said “There was a 100-bushel difference in my field with cover crops, and in a drought like we had, that just speaks for itself”.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelprdb1083051>

## **Cover crops in corn/soybean/small grain rotation**

Gary Sommers – Cover Crops: Gary grows corn, soybeans, and winter wheat on 1,475 of his 1,500 acres in Clinton, Wisconsin. The remaining 25 acres are

enrolled in CRP. Gary uses cover crops on his steeper fields.

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/sommerscovercroplowres011912.pdf>

Ralph Upton Jr. – Cover Crops: Ralph’s farm is 1,800 acres of no-till corn, soybeans, and wheat located in Hamilton County, Illinois. Ralph has implemented cover crops for several reasons. His primary goal was improving crop access to sub-soil moisture and building fertility, he also wanted to protect his soil from erosion, provide nitrogen for subsequent crops, and manage weeds.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/il/home/?cid=stelprdb114359>

4

Dave Brandt – Cover crops: When soybean farmer Dave Brandt started using cover crops in 1978, his soil was yellowish clay. Today his soil is black and organic matter has gone from 0.5% to 5.5%. He uses ryegrass and hairy vetch for cover crops on his 900 acres in Carroll, OH.

<http://magissues.farmprogress.com/MOR/MR01Jan12/mor031.pdf>

Steve Berger – Cover crops: Steve Berger became a convert when he noticed a yield boost on ground where there used to be a fencerow. The corn yield has increased on his 2,200 acre farm near Wellman, Iowa since he started using cereal rye as a cover crop.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/page/steve-berger>

<http://magissues.farmprogress.com/MOR/MR01Jan12/mor031.pdf>

## **Cover crops & grazing**

The Anderson Farm – Silvopasture + Grazing + Cover Crops + Field Crops + Perennial Forage: 22 head of beef cattle graze on 65 acres of pasture in Cherokee, IA. Burr oak on part of the farm creates a savannah-like area for grazing.

<http://practicalfarmers.org/blog/2013/08/19/perennial-pasture-management-a-beginners-perspective/>

Torray Wilson – Cover Crops + Perennial Forage. Torray and family farm about 640 acres organically near Paullina, IA. He grows organic corn (maize), soybeans

and oats and these are sold off the farm for cash. He also has a burgeoning sheep, cattle and pig enterprise.

<http://willoutwest.blogspot.com/2009/11/beginning-farmer.html>

<http://practicalfarmers.org/farmer-knowledge/research-reports/2013/grazing-cover-crops-fact-sheet/>

Dana Foster – Cover Crops + Grazing: Dana is a sheep and cattle farmer in Springdale, IA who planted cover crops on the fallow area of the garden. Dana got 3 grazes off of the cover crops the first year.

<http://practicalfarmers.org/farmer-knowledge/research-reports/2013/grazing-cover-crops-fact-sheet/>

Seth Watkins – Cover Crops + Pasture + Native Grasses: Seth grows corn, soybeans and alfalfa and runs a cow-calf operation on hilly pastureland in Taylor County, Iowa. The 2,800 acres of land in southwest Iowa that he owns, rents or manages include crop fields, pasture and natural habitat. He rotates 600 head of cattle through 2,300 acres of pasture to keep the land healthy and produce high-quality beef. He plants a diverse array of cover crops in his corn-soybean fields and has about 30 acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. In the summer of 2013, Seth seeded a 50-acre field with about eight acres of prairie in an effort to reduce soil loss, slow runoff and create vital patches of native habitat among his row crops. Watkins also preserves habitat for hunters, who keep the deer herds at a manageable level and provide an additional source of revenue for the farm—more than he could make by putting the same land in crops.

<http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/news/leopold-letter/2013/summer/prairie-conservation-strips>

## **Cover crops in corn/soybean + grazing**

Jim O'Hara – Cover Crops + Forage: Jim aerial seeded 60 acres of rye and radish cover crops in September. His 25-head Shenandoah, Iowa cow herd grazed on the cover crops during the winter. Iowa Soybean Association member.

<http://www.iasoybeans.com/stories/2014/05/08/cover-crops-and-coffee>

Gabe Brown - Cover Crops + Perennial Forage: Gabe, along with his wife, Shelly, and son, Paul, own and operate a diversified 5,400-acre farm and ranch near Bismarck, N.D. The Browns holistically integrate their grazing and no-till cropping system, which includes a wide variety of cash crops along with multi-species cover crops and all-natural, grass-fed beef, poultry and sheep.

<http://agriculturalinsights.com/episode-035-gabe-brown-on-cover-crops-no-till-and-livestock/>

<http://www.sare.org/Events/National-Conference-on-Cover-Crops-and-Soil-Health/Cover-Crop-Innovators-Video-Series/Gabe-Brown-Bismarck-North-Dakota>

## **Cover crops in commercial vegetable production**

JenEhr Family Farm – Paul Ehrhardt and Kay Jensen CSA farm on 50 of their 110 acres. They rotate cover crops on sloping land. Turkeys and chickens are pastured on the cover crop portions. On his bottomland, Paul rotates annual grass cover crops – winter wheat, rye, oats and barley – with his vegetables. These small grains add carbon and biomass to the soil and slow erosion. He has experimented with Sudangrass and soybeans with mixed success. He is interested in trying field peas, likely planting them with barley and triticale.

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/jenehrcovercrops111011lowres-2.pdf>

## ***Cover crops instead of irrigation***

Kent Solberg, Seven Pines Farm. Profile yet to be written – about his decision to pursue cover crops rather than invest in irrigation equipment.

<http://blog.nwf.org/2014/05/meet-the-cover-crop-champions/>

## **Cover crops & weed control**

Ryan Stockwell has been coupling no-till with cover crops on the ground he farms. He drills in a cover crop of radish following harvest of winter wheat and then plants to soybean the following year. The radish out-competed winter annual weeds, and broke up some plow pan as well. “It was amazing. It made my weed control really easy,” he remarked. <http://www.agriview.com/news/regional/stockwell-cover->

[crops-benefit-farmers-and-wildlife/article\\_bc9a5776-1583-54e8-8f44-6351364ff55e.html](http://crops-benefit-farmers-and-wildlife/article_bc9a5776-1583-54e8-8f44-6351364ff55e.html)

## **Agroforestry farmer profiles**

### **Woody-species windbreaks**

- \* For livestock protection
- \* For crop protection
- \* For reduction of wind erosion

Jim and Kari Miller farm southwest of Hoisington, KS – Windbreaks: Experienced increased yields of wheat and milo after installing windbreaks.  
<http://www.hpj.com/archives/2009/mar09/mar23/Fieldwindbreakplantingsincr.cfm#.U5Chmfm-1cY>

Paul Huenfeld – Agroforestry: Paul is a Nebraska organic farmer that installed windbreaks because he needed buffers around the farm. He also values the importance of habitat for the insects and predators.  
<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/training/chap6.pdf>

### **Riparian buffers**

Ron Risdal – Riparian buffer: In 1990 corn, soybean, and alfalfa farmer Ron Risdal planted a riparian buffer on his farm in Story County Iowa. Ron says “I don't think we've lost hardly any stream bank since 1993, where before, we were moving the fences about every year. When it floods, the water stops at the buffer strip now instead of washing all over the bank. We don't have to move fences every year, and we don't have to haul rocks in the gullies like we used to do years ago.”  
<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/practices/rb.php>  
<http://www.buffer.forestry.iastate.edu/Demosites/HTML/risdal.html>

Ron Strum – Agroforestry: Ron grows corn and soybeans on his 1,000 acre farm in Story County, IA. Since installing a riparian buffer, he no longer loses crops during wet years and he no longer gets his tractor stuck.

<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/training/chap5.pdf>

Andreas Farms – Cover Crops + riparian buffer: Dan Andreas' dairy farm is a milking operation with more than 1,500 dairy cows. Nearly 4,000 acres are used to grow forage for the cows. Dan uses cover crops on the active fields to improve soil health and to prevent soil erosion and nutrient runoff. He also installed a buffer to improve water quality.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelprdb1253957>

## **Silvopasture**

WE Farm –Silvopasture: Josh Egenolf and wife Laura Beth Wayne raise cattle, pigs, and poultry using high-density grazing patterns on a farm in Owen County, Indiana. Forested parts of the property provide acorns, paw paws, beechnuts, and walnuts for the pigs. Egenolf says that chefs appreciate nut-finished pigs. The farm is leased from Lisa Harris of Indianapolis. Harris is a big fan of leasing to farmers that are stewards to the land.

[http://issuu.com/screamingeaglemedia/docs/farm\\_e6f4925560a44a/18](http://issuu.com/screamingeaglemedia/docs/farm_e6f4925560a44a/18)

Early Boots Farm – Silvopasture: Grass-fed and finished beef farm, Tyler Carlson and Kate Droske. Oak and pine saplings on 20 acres of old crop fields in Sauk Centre, MN. Trees are planted to optimize the pasture microclimate, to reduce livestock stress, and for future timber sales.

[http://maawg.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/maawg\\_case-studies-earlyboots\\_2013-final.pdf](http://maawg.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/maawg_case-studies-earlyboots_2013-final.pdf)

## **Timber production**

East Grove Farm – Agroforestry: Timber covers almost half of the southeast Iowa farm's 800 total acres. Kurt Garretson has 5 acres planted in Elderberries with plans to expand and become certified organic. Also in the works are plans for a winery with a focus on farm-related ecotourism.

<http://midamericanagroforestry.net/agroforestry-case-studies/elderberry-eastgrove/>

### **Fruit/Nut Crop**

Red Fern Farm – Tom Wahl – Agroforestry: Fruit, berry, nuts, container-grown seedlings and medicinal planting roots near Wapello, Iowa. Chestnuts are one of the farm’s most profitable crops. Tom is also a chestnut broker for other growers in the area.

<http://midamericanagroforestry.net/agroforestry-case-studies/redfernfarm-chestnuts/>

New Forest Farm – Mark Shepard’s 106-acre perennial permaculture farm in the Driftless Area of Southwestern Wisconsin. Produce includes chestnuts, hazelnuts, pine nuts, apples, asparagus, and many other perennial fruits and nuts. Cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys are also raised on the farm.

<http://www.newforestfarm.net/in-the-news.html>

Larry and Nancy Turner – Agroforestry: Larry and Nancy Turner have more than 1700 aronia bushes on their farm, Winding Creek, in Blemond, IA. In 2013 they harvested 14,400 pounds of berries. Sold wholesale, the aronia berries can bring annual gross revenue of \$2300 - \$6500 per acre, and even more when marketed directly.

[http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Aronia%20Case%20Study%20FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Aronia%20Case%20Study%20FINAL%20(1).pdf)

Bill and Geri Hanson – Agroforestry: Bill and Geri Hanson have been growing black walnuts on their Centerville, IA farm since the early 1980’s. They harvest 1500 to 2000lbs per acre during full production years.

[http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Black%20Walnut%20Case%20Study%20FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Black%20Walnut%20Case%20Study%20FINAL%20(1).pdf)



John and Betty Wittrig – Agroforestry: John and Betty Wittrig grow up to 6000 pounds of organic chestnuts on their 4.5 acre Winfield, IA farm every year. The nuts are sold for \$6/lb and they sell the entire crop every year.

<http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Chinese%20Chestnut%20Case%20Study,%20FINAL.pdf>

Mark Fisher – Agroforestry: Mark Fisher of Clear Lake, IA grows Christmas trees on his 20 acres that he originally purchased for hunting.

<http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Christmas%20Tree%20Farm%20FINAL.pdf>

Natura Farms – Agroforestry: Paul Otten grows Elderberries at Natura Farms in Scanidia, MN. He sells the berries direct or to wine and supplement manufacturers. He also sells plant plugs to growers.

<http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Elderberry%20Case%20Study%20-%20Final.pdf>

Hazel Acres – agroforestry: Roger and Jeff Hanson grow and study hazelnuts on their farm, Hazel Acres, in Fenton, IA. Hazelnuts can be sold direct in the shell or roasted. Hazelnut oil is almost identical to olive oil and makes a superior biodiesel.

<http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Hazelnut%20Case%20Study%20FINAL.pdf>

## **Perennial forage/grazing farmer profiles**

### **Mob grazing for building soil organic matter, vegetation management**

Breitkreutz Farm – Perennial Forage: 125 cow-calf pairs mob grazing in Redwood County, Minnesota. The family has a “cooperative farming agreement” with the DNR where they help manage the state land by grazing their cattle herd there periodically.

<http://www.redwoodfallsgazette.com/article/20101122/NEWS/311229972>

<http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/blog/brian-devore/making-diversity-farm-pay-its-own-way>

### **Managed grazing**

Altfrid and Sue Krusenbaum – Managed grazing: Altfrid and Sue of Elkhorn, WI started farming in 1990 with a leased conventional dairy/cash grain operation. Over the years they have transitioned to an organic grass-based farm. Conversion studied and assisted by the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/an-organic-dairying-overview-from-the-krusenbaum-farm-studies/>

Full Circle Farm - Rick Adamski and Valerie Dantoin – Managed grazing: Managed grazing dairy farmers in Seymour, WI. Rick and Valerie hosted the first public demonstration of managed grazing in Wisconsin. From 2002 to 2004, Rick worked for the Glacierland Resource Conservation and Development Program, Inc. as a grazing assistant, consulting with farmers in 13 counties and the Oneida Nation. From 1996-2000, as a watershed education specialist with the Oneida Nation, Valerie introduced the tribe to managed grazing and organic farming, establishing a demonstration farm on the Tsyunhehkwá farm. Rick and Valerie have held annual pasture walks on their farm for nearly 20 years, hosting more than 1,000 farmers and ag educators. In 1998, Full Circle Farm was named the Shawano County Conservation Farm of the Year.

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/pub/jul02/rising.html>

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/rick-adamski-and-valerie-dantoin-receive-cals-award/>

Green Acres Dairy – Managed grazing: Matt and Tabitha Hartwig and son Ben operate a 160-cow dairy grazing operation in Marathon County, Wisconsin. The Hartwigs' purchased their 180 acres farm in 2009 and lease another 315 acres, with 265 acres of the total land available in improved pastures and the remainder in crops. Matt is a current board member of GrassWorks, Inc., a statewide grazing producer organization.

[http://www.progressivedairy.com/index.php/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=5606:young-grazing-producer-profiles&catid=72:producers&Itemid=115](http://www.progressivedairy.com/index.php/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5606:young-grazing-producer-profiles&catid=72:producers&Itemid=115)

Enchanted Meadows Organic Dairy Farm – Managed grazing: Art and Jean Thicke own the 477 acre dairy farm and run it with the help of Chad and Melissa Crowley. The farm consists of 90 rotationally grazed milking cows, located in La Crescent, Minnesota.

<http://www.westbycreamery.com/patron-profile-crowley.html>

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?&c\\_id=nrcs143\\_023449](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?&c_id=nrcs143_023449)

### **Dairy grazing – beginning farmer**

Joe and Christy Tomandl – Grazing: Joe and Christy own a 320-acre grass-based dairy near Medford, WI. In 2010 they purchased a 200-acre satellite grass-based dairy 3 miles away. The satellite dairy is managed by young farmers Clem and Melinda Miller. Clem is a 2013 graduate of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) <http://www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org/pressroom/a-satellite-farm-grows-new-opportunities>

Nate Weisenfeld – Perennial forage + grazing: Nate is beginning farmer with an 80-acre grass farm near Merrill, WI with additional pasture and milking facilities leased from a neighboring farm <http://www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org/pressroom/a-mentor-s-help-lays-the-groundwork-for-success-in-dairying>

Gabby and Julio Rojas – Grazing: Young farmers that own a herd of dairy cattle and lease dairy facilities with 60-acres of pasture near Wausua, WI. <http://www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org/pressroom/living-the-dream-the-start-of-a-family-dairy>

### **Conversion of cropland to perennial forage**

Hans Breitenmoser – Perennial forage + grazing: As a project for his employee Nate Weisenfeld (see above), Merrill, WI dairy farmer Hans Breitenmoser rented a 78-acre farm nearby that had grown row crops. They no-till planted the farm to meadow fescue, red clover and sweet clover for grazing. <http://www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org/pressroom/a-mentor-s-help-lays-the-groundwork-for-success-in-dairying>

### **Hay production in rotation with corn/soybean**

Wallace Farms – Perennial Forage: 160 acres in Keystone, IA. Long crop rotation of small grains, some organic corn, and forages for hay or grazing. Forage grazed by cattle followed by pastured chickens.

<http://practicalfarmers.org/blog/2012/08/23/high-value-rotations-on-a-grass-based-system/>

## **Forage production for hay or grazing on HEL or marginal cropland**

### ***Native grasses***

Shepherd Farms - Agroforestry + Perennial Forage + Grazing: 2300-acre operation in Chariton, MO produces bison, pecans, native grass seed, corn & soybeans; emphasis on direct marketing.

<http://maawg.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/shepherd-case-study-1.pdf>