



Tools of the Trade



Summer 2015
Continuous Living Cover Series

photo: Lowery Creek, Richard Cates

The “Trade” is planning and implementing farming systems that:

DELIVER yields of commodity crop

DELIVER on-farm and off-farm benefits to soil health and water quality

SECURE long-term stability of the farm and its resources

Continuous Living Cover practices are tools that can be used in combination with each other and other tools to:

- Deal with nutrient loading concerns
- Deal with soil erosion concerns
- Deal with N leakage concerns
- Achieve improved soil health on the farm
- Improve resilience and robustness of the farm
- Maintain profitability, short-term and long-term

Goal	Continuous Living Cover Practices
Reduce nutrient (N and P) loading into surface waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended crop rotation with perennial forage • Strategic placement of perennial strips within fields • Riparian buffers • Grassed waterways
Reduce water erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended crop rotation with perennial forage on slopes above 5% • Permanent perennial forage or agroforestry planting on slopes above 14% • Strategic placement of perennial strips within fields • Cover crops on the ground in spring & fall

Goal	Continuous Living Cover Practices
Reduce wind erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windbreaks /Shelterbelts • Hedgerows • Cover crops • Winter grain and perennial forages in rotation
Reduce N leakage to surface or ground waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover crop used as “catch crop” • Extended crop rotation with perennials and small grains
Improve soil health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended crop rotation with perennial forage • Integration of livestock • Cover crops • Complex cover crop mixtures
Improve farm resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacking of multiple CLC practices • Consistent use of CLC practices
Maintain profitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the shortest rotations on the flattest land • Add agroforestry plantings that produce a cash crop • Use extended rotations verified as profitable by University research • Integration of livestock

Continuous Living Cover practices are effective for meeting the above goals, but their effectiveness is even greater when multiple CLC practices are stacked on a single farm; and when stacked with other types of practices to control soil erosion, N leakage, and nutrient loading into surface waters. These may include:

- Reduced tillage
- Drainage management
- Terracing and contouring
- Bioreactors