

Cover Cropping for Climate Smart Agriculture

In recent years there have been several new terms being used pertaining to modern agriculture. Terms such as Conservation farming, Regenerative agriculture, Sustainable agriculture, Climate smart agriculture to name but a few. All these terms suggest a different approach to commercial and small scale production. This article considers Cover cropping for Climate Smart Agriculture.

Cover cropping is one of these conservation or regenerative techniques; and as an agricultural practice is becoming more and more accepted and utilised in cropping programs, permanent plantings and livestock enterprises around the world. Individual farmers are examining their traditional farming practices and adapting them to include a cover cropping component.

Why this change?

Farmers themselves have identified that cover crops can add numerous benefits to soil health, which in turn leads to increased plant and animal vitality and ultimately improved quality of product for human consumption. These benefits include building soil organic matter, improved water infiltration, reduced weed pressure, reduced soil compaction, nitrogen fixation by legumes, reduced wind and water erosion, improved yields, food for animals and ultimately increased yields and profitability.

With the very real effects of climate change being felt and observed in agriculture today, if agriculturalists across the board do not consider changing some traditional practices then food security and long term productions will be threatened. The soil on any farm is

the ultimate resource and the protection, improvement and then maintaining those improvements to the soil, should be the critical goal of every farmer. Cover cropping is just one of the tools available to producers today to utilise in achieving improved soil potential.

Organisations such as the World Bank and the FAO have identified shifts in climate patterns and as a result agricultural practices need to shift with them.

With cover cropping being a relatively young “science” – farmer observations and on farm trials are leading the direction of practical implementation of cover crops while the formal research bodies such as universities and other organisations follow behind with the scientific peer reviewed papers.

Universal concept with individual applications

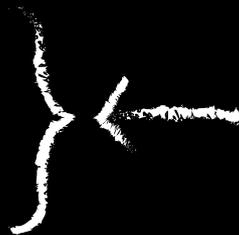
Seed supply companies are providing the back up in researching which types of cover crops will be most cost effective farmers and are then making these varieties available. Cover cropping is a universal concept with an individual application and the key is finding South African solutions to South African problems.

Farming remains one of the most innovative professions in the world and as the effects of climate change are felt, so too the innovation of farmers will develop to meet the demands of changing weather patterns and the challenges presented to world food security. Cover cropping is one technique which will assist in climate smart agriculture. ■

WHY SHOULD YOU COVER CROP?

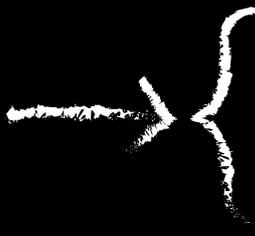
Cover crops rehabilitate, restore and help manage

- Organic matter
- pH buffering
- Soil microbes
- Nutrient cycling



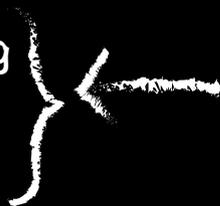
soil health

soil structure



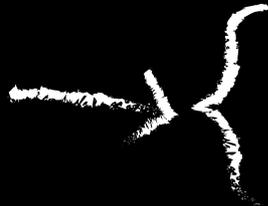
- Aggregate stability
- Aeration
- Water infiltration

- Reduce N-leaching
- Erosion control
- Reduce run-off



environmental quality

manage pests



- Weed suppression
- Disease suppression
- Nematode control

CONTACT US WE WILL HELP YOU TAILOR MAKE A COVER CROP SOLUTION FOR YOUR OPERATION.

