



# New York

## Cover Crop Demonstration Trial Results (2021-2025)

*featuring Jay Swede, Gary Swede Farms  
Pavilion, NY*

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*December 4, 2025*

***State leads: Aaron Ristow with support from  
Ben Roosa, Caitlin Tucker, Maria Lucero, & Stephanie Castle***

***State partner: Cornell University***

***AFT National support team: Dr. Michelle Perez, Dr. Bianca Moebius-Clune, Dr. Gabrielle Roesch-McNally,  
Aysha Tapp Ross, Dr. Robert Ellis, Ellen Yeatman, June Grabemeyer, & Jen Tillman***

# Session agenda

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- About the Project
- New York Farms and Trial Design
- Soils Results
- Economics Results
- Cover Crop Biomass Results
- Discussion with Jay Swede
- Q&A



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

Photo: Chris Pierce Demo Trial Site, Kentucky



## About AFT's OFDT project: “Conquering Cover Crop Challenges from Coast to Coast”

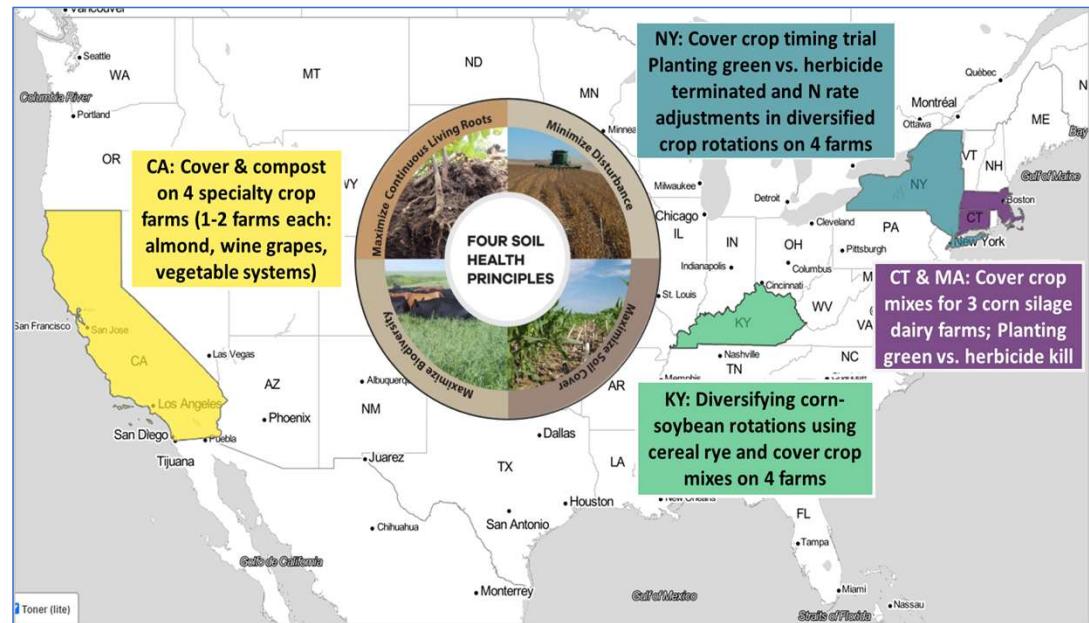
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- Supporting **farmer-driven transitions** to improve soil health thru adoption of cover crops & other soil health practices
- Provide an innovative combination of **financial and technical resources, decision support, and assistance** for broader adoption
- Analyze the **environmental, economic, and social outcomes** of demo trials.



# About AFT's OFDT project: “Conquering Cover Crop Challenges from Coast to Coast”

- 15 farms in:
  - 3 geographic regions over
  - 5 states
    - CA, KY, NY, MA, & CT
  - representing 6 crop systems
    - Almonds
    - wine grapes
    - Vegetables
    - corn-soybeans-wheat
    - corn silage-triticale
- **Regional issues & cropping system challenges:** soil moisture management (CA), planting & termination timing in crop rotations (NY), termination methods (New E), & cover crop mixes (KY)



# AFT's soil health demo trial team

## CIG Leads

Soils Team



Econ Team



Social Team



## State Leads



### Contractors:

Jodi Letham, Cornell Cooperative Extension

David DeGolyer, Western NY Crop Mgt Association



KENTUCKY

CALIFORNIA

MA & CT

# Farm & Trial Design



Photo: Branton Farm 2023 Field Day, New York

American Farmland Trust 

## New York Demonstration Farm Network

- Learn from local farmers about successful soil health implementation
- Learn about changes in economic benefits and costs from their real-life experiences
- Learn about observed changes in soil quality like erosion or water runoff
- Learn how to integrate into current system



## **18 Farms**

- 4 participating in cover crop project
- Farm size ranges 3 to 13,000 acres
- 54,175 total acres across 10 NY counties
- Practices observed: Cover crops, planting green, reduced tillage, adaptive-N management, biochar

# New York Cover Crop Trials

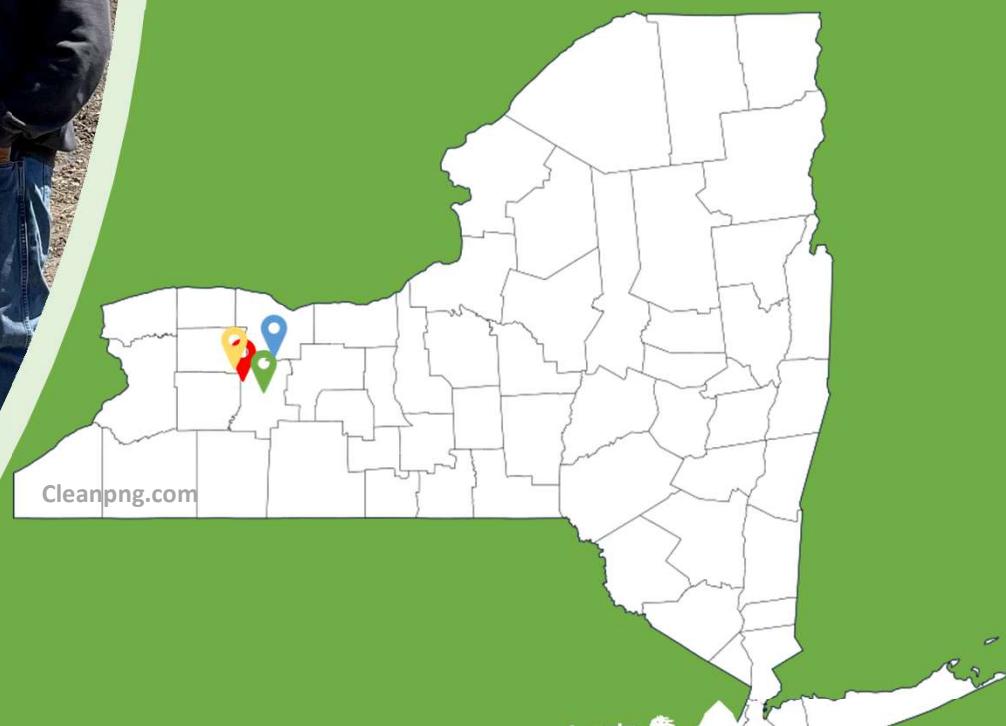
**Regional cover crop issues:** field access in wet springs, nitrogen availability for cash crop, short time for cover crop establishment after corn.

## Farm Partners:

- HarGo – Genesee County
- Macauley Farms – Livingston County
- Mulligan Farm – Livingston County
- Swede Farm – Genesee County



Aaron & Jay Swede, 2023 Demo Farm Tour



American Farmland Trust

# Planting Green

## What is it?

- Planting cash crop into living cover
- Delay cover crop termination by a week or two

## Benefits

- Extend benefits of cover crops, while mitigating challenges of wet soil
- Biomass accumulation, can double in two weeks
- Dries soil at planting, conserves moisture later in growing season

## Considerations

- Equipment
- Management
- Cool soils, delayed emergence of cash crop
- Termination timing





# New York Farms

- **Typical Row Crops**
  - Corn, Corn silage, Soybeans, Winter wheat, & Triticale
- **Cover Crop Types**
  - 10- and 5-Way mixes, Triticale, Rye, & Vetch mix
- **Treatment Types**
  - 2 Farms used no cover crops, pre-planting termination, and planting green
  - 2 Farms incorporated roller/crimping into termination

# Sampling Methodology

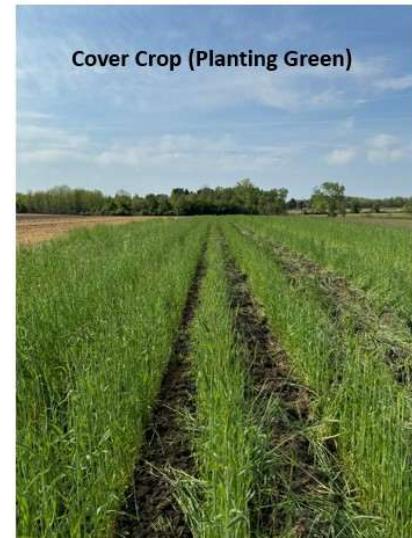
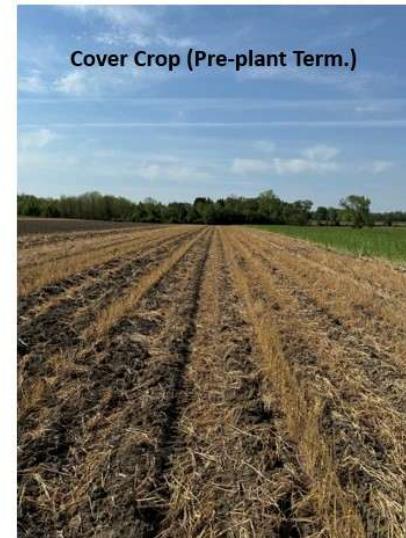
- USDA-NRCS In Field Soil Health Assessments:
  - Compaction
  - Soil organism habitat loss
  - Organic matter depletion
  - Aggregate instability
- Cornell Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health (CASH)
  - Quantitatively analyzes 12 physical, biological, and chemical soil properties
  - Translated to scores and ranked from very low to very high
  - Interpretations are made relative to other farms of similar soil textures
  - Each farm is also given an overall score
- Cover Crop Biomass and Nitrogen Sampling
  - Spring sampling at CC termination and 1–3 weeks later in non-terminated plots
  - Sub-samples are sent off for Dry Matter (DM) and nitrate concentration for estimating plant-available nitrogen (PAN).



# Swede Farms Overview

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- **Farm Size:** 4,500 acres
- **County:** Genesee
- **Crops in Trial:** Wheat, corn silage, soybeans
- **Cover Crops:** 10-species mix, rye with radish, triticale
- **Treatments:**
  - No Cover Crop (unusual for this farm)
  - Pre-Plant Termination of cover crop (status quo)
  - Planting Green into cover crop (advanced level of cover cropping)



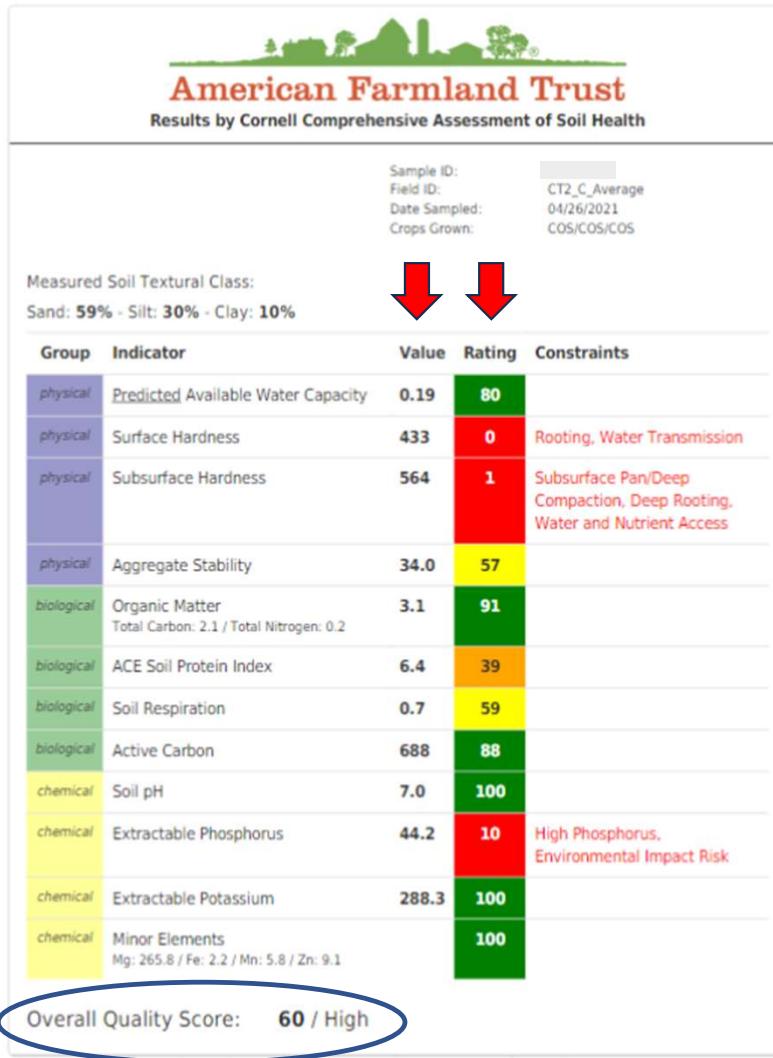


# SOIL RESULTS

Photo: HaRGo Farm Soil Sampling, New York



American Farmland Trust

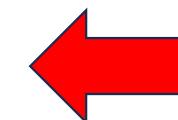


## Laboratory soil health assessment: Sample CASH report

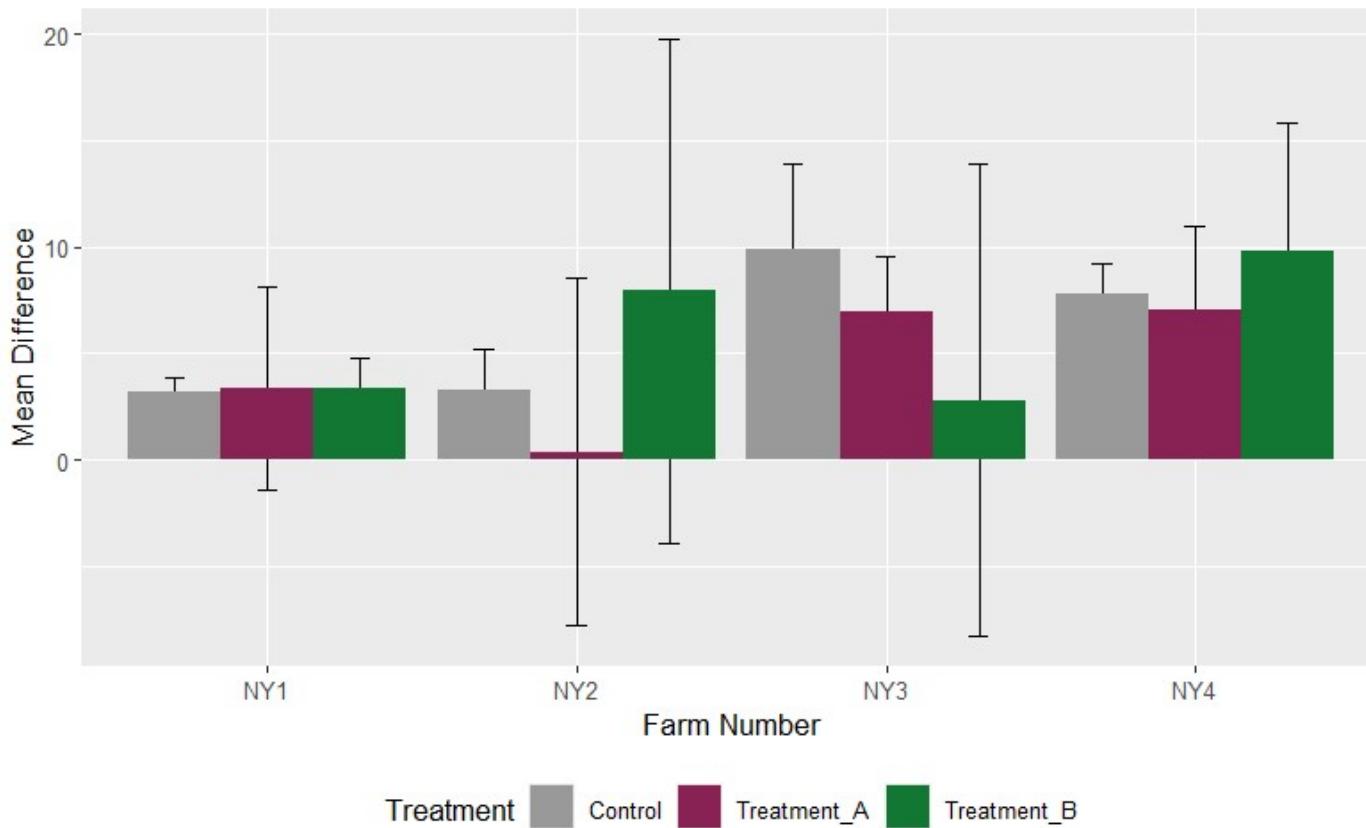
- CASH report quantitatively analyzes physical, biological, and chemical soil properties, known as soil health indicators
- Raw values are translated to scores based on soil texture and ranked from very low to very high
- The rank is color coded
- Each farm is also given an overall score

### CASH Scoring Legend

Score	Rank	Color Code
80 – 100	Very High	Dark Green
60 – 80	High	Light Green
40 – 60	Medium	Yellow
20 – 40	Low	Orange
0 – 20	Very Low	Red



# Differences in Overall Score from Y1 to Y5



- Overall scores increased across the board for all four NY demo trial farms
- No significant differences between treatments
- Most likely due to moderate changes in management practices

## Slide 16

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**EY1** Slides 25-30 to be modified for just the ONE featured STATE  
Ellen Yeatman, 2025-09-25T15:52:55.159

**EY1 0** [@Aysha Tapp Ross] modify following slides to show just NY results  
Ellen Yeatman, 2025-11-13T22:56:32.082

# Swede Assessment

Measured Soil Textural Class:

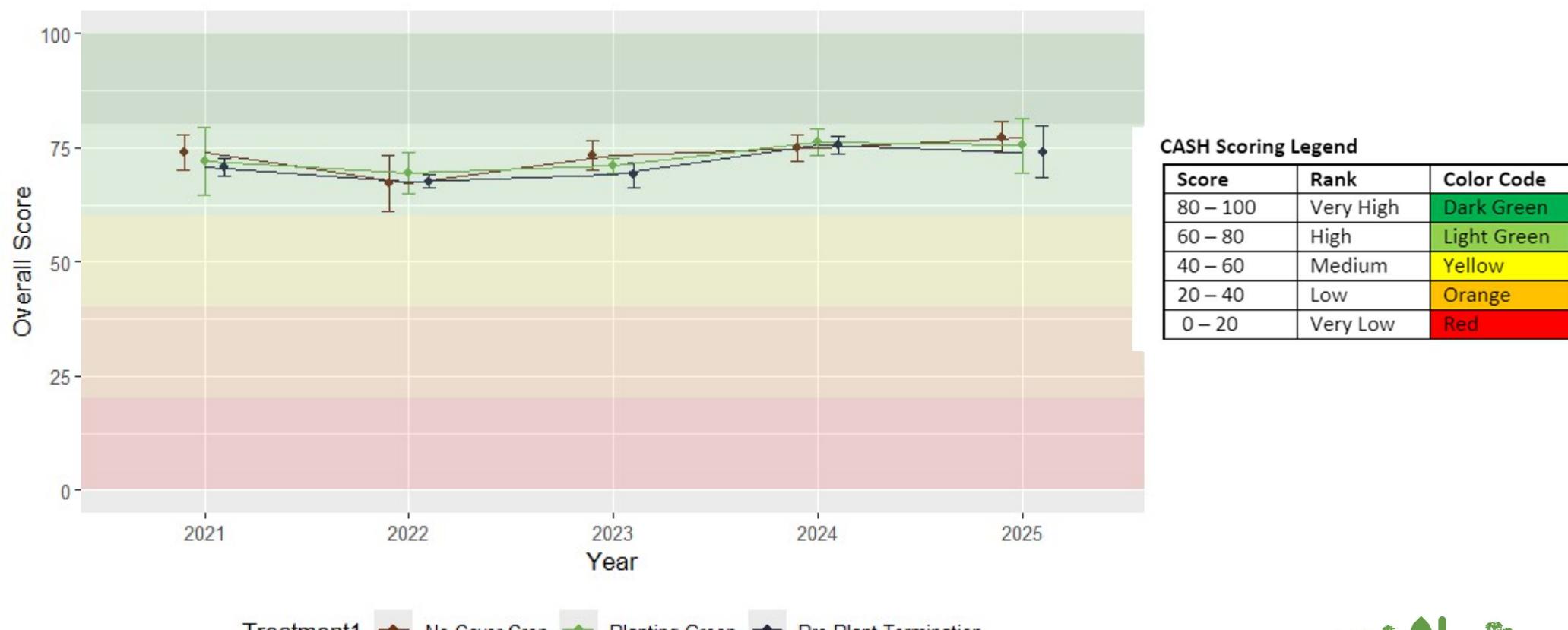
Sand: 59% - Silt: 30% - Clay: 10%

Group	Indicator	Value	Rating	Constraints
physical	Predicted Available Water Capacity	0.19	80	
physical	Surface Hardness	433	0	Rooting, Water Transmission
physical	Subsurface Hardness	564	1	Subsurface Pan/Deep Compaction, Deep Rooting, Water and Nutrient Access
physical	Aggregate Stability	34.0	57	
biological	Organic Matter Total Carbon: 2.1 / Total Nitrogen: 0.2	3.1	91	
biological	ACE Soil Protein Index	6.4	39	
biological	Soil Respiration	0.7	59	
biological	Active Carbon	688	88	
chemical	Soil pH	7.0	100	
chemical	Extractable Phosphorus	44.2	10	High Phosphorus, Environmental Impact Risk
chemical	Extractable Potassium	288.3	100	
chemical	Minor Elements Mg: 265.8 / Fe: 2.2 / Mn: 5.8 / Zn: 9.1		100	

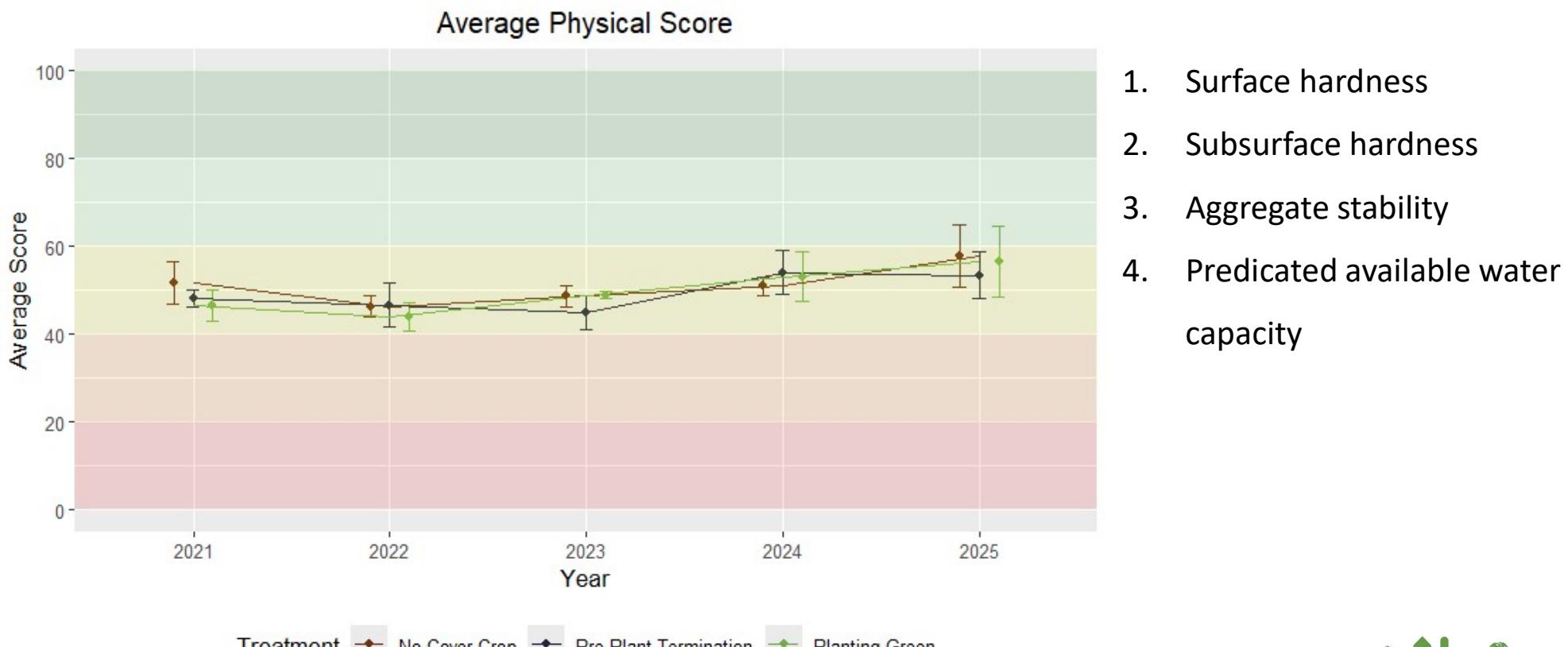
Overall Quality Score: **60** / High

- Assessed the score changes over time for the 3 indicator groups
  - Physical
  - Biological
  - chemical

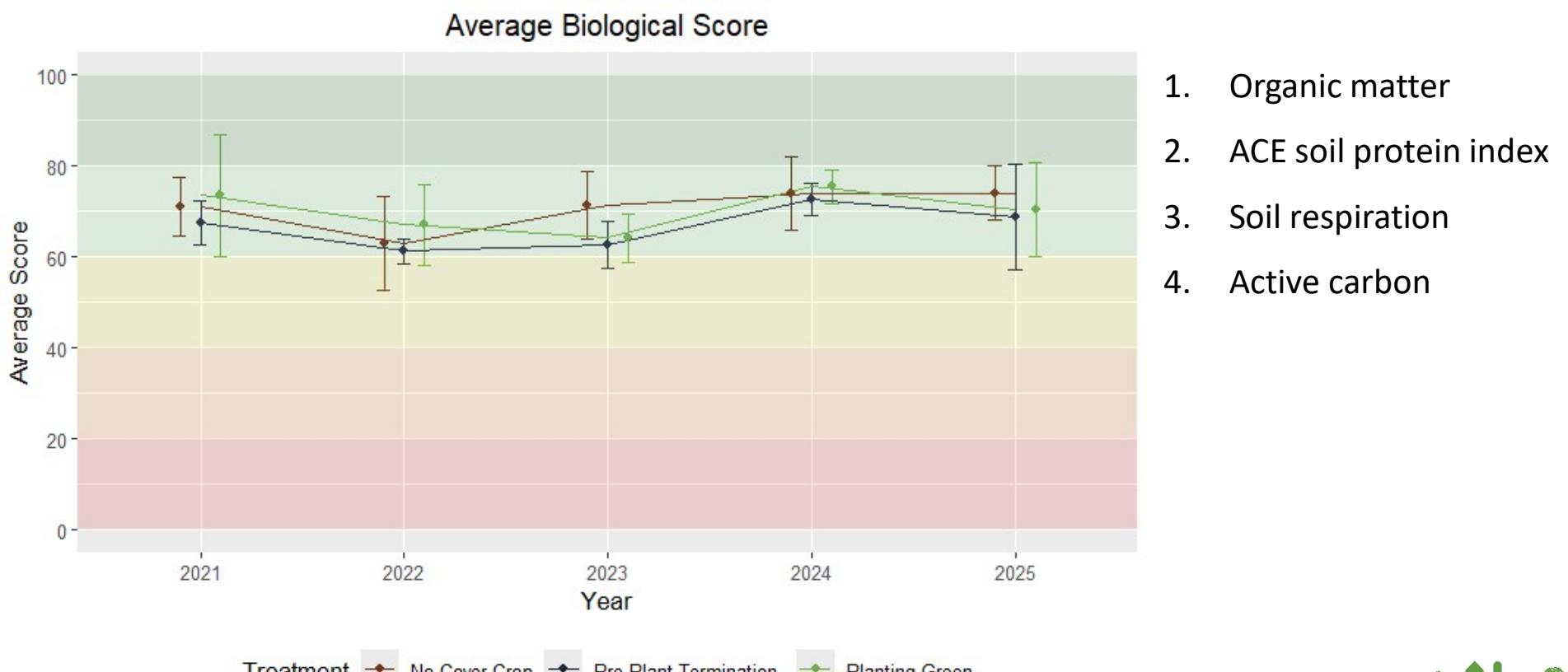
# Swede overall score changes over time



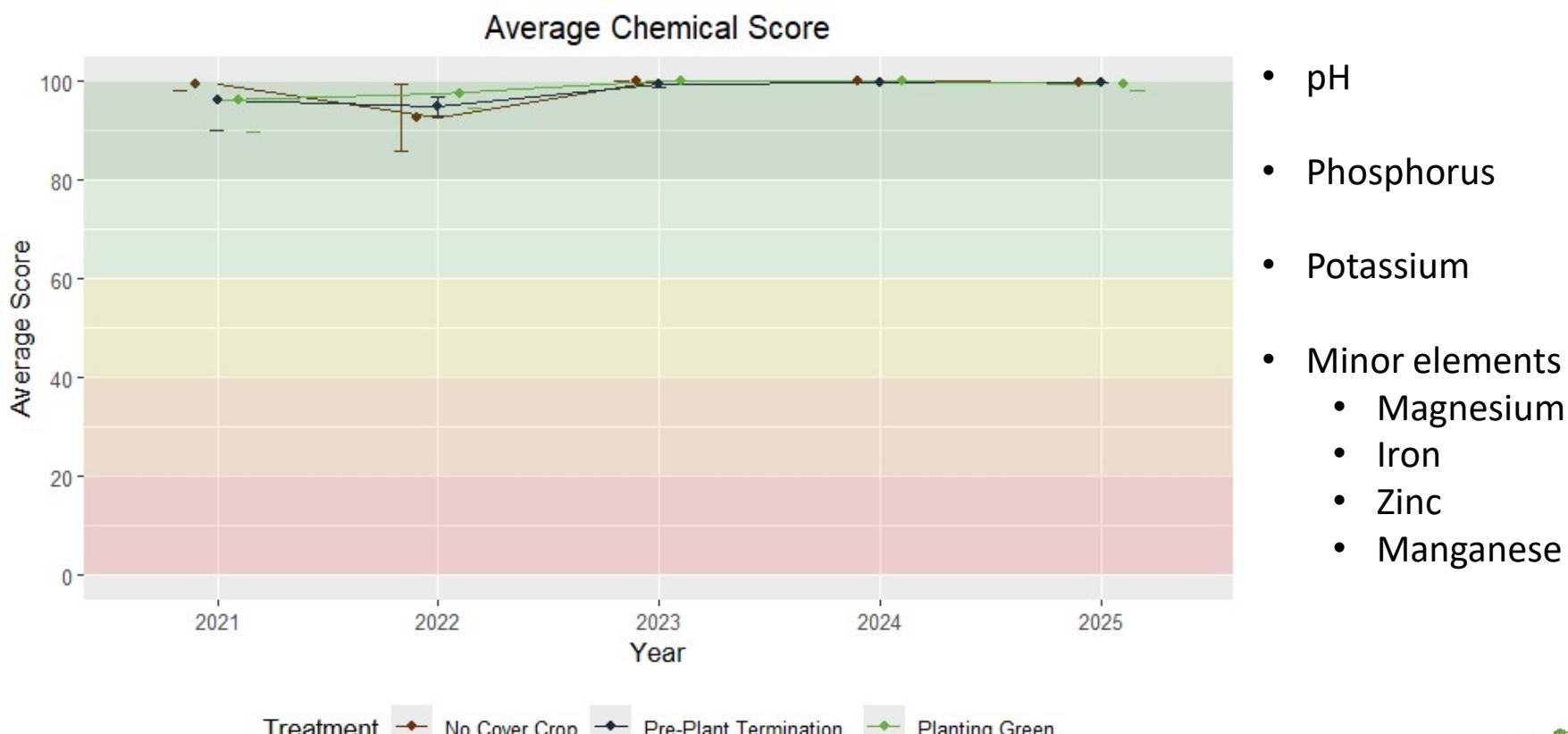
# Swede physical score changes over time



# Swede biological score changes over time



# Swede chemical score changes over time



# Soil Results Key Takeaways

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## Overarching takeaways:

- Need more time, especially with soil health successful farms

## Biggest benefit:

- Overall increase in soil health across the board

## Biggest challenges:

- Early adopters of soil health practices: Lack of substantial management differences between control and treatment



**EY1**      [@Aysha Tapp Ross] modify to apply to just NY farms  
Ellen Yeatman, 2025-11-13T22:56:55.976

# ECONOMIC RESULTS



NY2 Demo Trial, New York

American Farmland Trust 

# Economic Methods

## Data collected:

## 1. Farmer provided

- Crop & yield & acreage
- Operation date & category
- Machinery information
- Material Type
  - \$/unit
  - Rate (units/ac)
- Any other operations not applied on a per acre basis

## 2. National Datasets

- Machinery Estimates
- Crop and Input prices
- Cover crop costs
- Inputs prices & rates (seed & chemical)
- Crop yields
- Practice timing

## Combined national estimates with on-farm costs into one worksheet



# Economic Analysis

- Developed financial analysis for each farm by crop year

- Calculated net income:

**Yield x Price - Costs = Net Income**

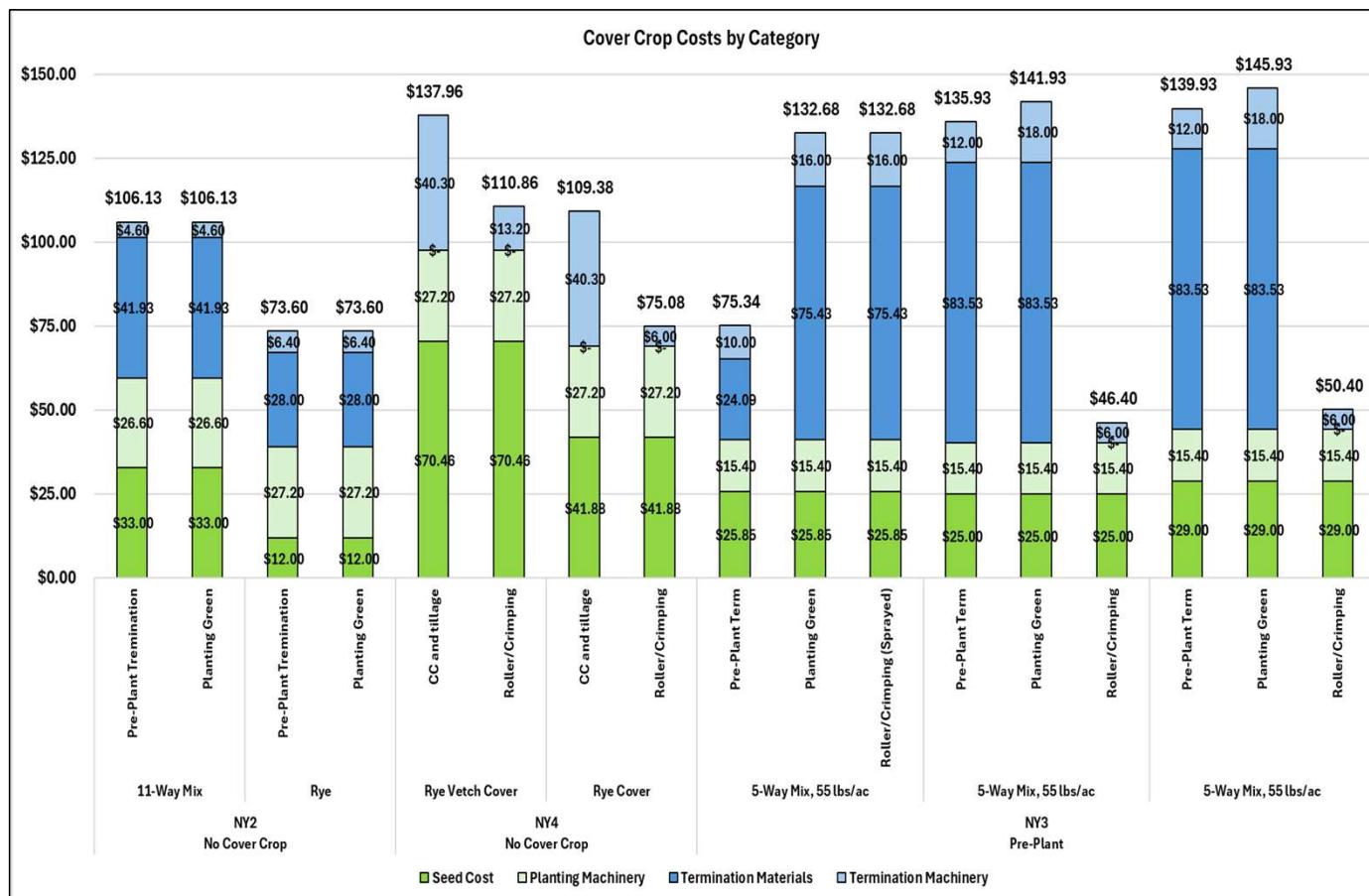
- Compared net income & treatment costs between treatments and control

Report Table Y: Value of Production, Costs and Summary of Field Operations Data	2021 Winter Wheat			10 way mix - Corn Silage			Rye - Soybeans			Triticale - Corn Silage		
	Control	Treatment A	Treatment B	No Cover Crop	Pre-Plant Termination	Planting Green	Control	Treatment A	Treatment B	Control	Treatment A	Treatment B
Acres	6	6	6	6.08	6.08	0	6.08	6.08	6.08	6.08	6.08	6.08
<b>Production<sup>1</sup></b>												
Crop Produced	Winter Wheat	Winter Wheat	Winter Wheat	Corn Silage	Corn Silage	Corn Silage	Soybeans	Soybeans	Soybeans	Corn Silage	Corn Silage	Corn Silage
Yield Unit	bu	bu	bu	Ton	Ton	Ton	Bushel	Bushel	Bushel	Ton	Ton	Ton
Yield in Unit per Acre	121.70	121.70	121.70	25.05	24.4	22.57	67.7	71.7	65.7	24.87	24.9	25.33
Price/Value per Unit <sup>2</sup>	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$61.00	\$61.00	\$61.00	\$13.30	\$13.30	\$13.30	\$61.00	\$61.00	\$61.00
Cover Crop Harvested as Ensilage/Forage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Field Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yield in Unit per Acre	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Price/Value per Unit <sup>2</sup>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Crop Produced	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yield Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yield in Unit per Acre	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Price/Value per Unit <sup>2</sup>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Value of Production</b>	<b>\$608.50</b>	<b>\$608.50</b>	<b>\$608.50</b>	<b>\$1,528.05</b>	<b>\$1,488.40</b>	<b>\$1,376.77</b>	<b>\$900.41</b>	<b>\$953.61</b>	<b>\$873.81</b>	<b>\$1,517.07</b>	<b>\$1,518.90</b>	<b>\$1,545.13</b>
<b>Machinery Cost Estimates<sup>1,3,4</sup></b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>	<b>\$/Ac</b>
Tillage Operations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30	\$17.30
Planting Operations	\$15.40	\$15.40	\$15.40	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20	\$17.20
Nutrient Application	\$18.35	\$18.35	\$18.35	\$25.15	\$25.15	\$25.15	\$5.55	\$5.55	\$5.55	\$36.35	\$36.35	\$36.35
Pesticide & Herbicide Application	\$25.60	\$25.60	\$25.60	\$18.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00
Harvest Operations	\$62.30	\$62.30	\$62.30	\$179.20	\$179.20	\$179.20	\$33.40	\$33.40	\$33.40	\$32.80	\$32.80	\$32.80
Other Machinery Operations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Cover Crop Planting Operations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15.40	\$15.40	\$0.00	\$15.40	\$15.40	\$0.00	\$15.40	\$15.40
Cover Crop Termination Machinery	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$0.00	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$0.00	\$4.50	\$4.50
Irrigation Application					\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mowing					\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Pruning or Trimming					\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Machinery Cost</b>	<b>\$121.65</b>	<b>\$121.65</b>	<b>\$121.65</b>	<b>\$256.85</b>	<b>\$267.75</b>	<b>\$267.75</b>	<b>\$82.45</b>	<b>\$97.85</b>	<b>\$97.85</b>	<b>\$112.65</b>	<b>\$132.55</b>	<b>\$132.55</b>
<b>Materials Purchased Actual Cost<sup>1</sup></b>												
Crop Seed	\$ 40.04	\$ 40.04	\$ 40.04	\$ 153.30	\$153.30	\$153.30	\$70.00	\$70.00	\$70.00	\$120.31	\$120.31	\$120.31
Cover Crop Seed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$0.00	\$33.60	\$33.60	\$0.00	\$18.90	\$18.90	\$0.00	\$10.40
Nutrients	\$ 71.69	\$ 71.69	\$ 71.69	\$ 71.69	\$368.80	\$368.80	\$127.68	\$127.68	\$127.68	\$201.53	\$201.53	\$201.53
Pesticides & Herbicides	\$ 28.74	\$ 28.74	\$ 28.74	\$ 47.06	\$25.17	\$25.17	\$32.86	\$23.50	\$23.50	\$14.18	\$14.18	\$14.18
Cover Crop Termination Herbicides/Materials	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$0.00	\$18.11	\$8.58	\$0.00	\$9.36	\$9.36	\$0.00	\$9.36	\$9.36
Other Materials	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Materials Cost</b>	<b>\$140.47</b>	<b>\$140.47</b>	<b>\$140.47</b>	<b>\$569.16</b>	<b>\$598.97</b>	<b>\$589.44</b>	<b>\$230.54</b>	<b>\$249.44</b>	<b>\$249.44</b>	<b>\$336.03</b>	<b>\$355.79</b>	<b>\$355.79</b>
<b>Total Cost Per Acre</b>	<b>\$262.12</b>	<b>\$262.12</b>	<b>\$262.12</b>	<b>\$826.01</b>	<b>\$866.72</b>	<b>\$857.19</b>	<b>\$312.99</b>	<b>\$347.29</b>	<b>\$347.29</b>	<b>\$448.68</b>	<b>\$488.34</b>	<b>\$488.34</b>
<b>Net Income (Value of Production minus Costs)</b>	<b>\$346.38</b>	<b>\$346.38</b>	<b>\$346.38</b>	<b>\$702.04</b>	<b>\$621.69</b>	<b>\$519.58</b>	<b>\$587.42</b>	<b>\$606.32</b>	<b>\$526.52</b>	<b>\$1,068.39</b>	<b>\$1,030.56</b>	<b>\$1,056.79</b>
Cover Crop Termination Cost	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$22.61	\$13.08	\$0.00	\$13.86	\$13.86	\$0.00	\$13.86	\$13.86
Cover Crop Establishment Cost	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$49.00	\$49.00	\$0.00	\$34.30	\$34.30	\$0.00	\$25.80	\$25.80
Total Cover Crop Cost	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$71.61	\$62.08	\$0.00	\$48.16	\$48.16	\$0.00	\$39.66	\$39.66



# New York Cover Crop Costs (\$/ac) by Farm by Year

- **Trials using pre-plant termination and planting green (NY2)**
  - Cover crop costs downward trend
  - Seed costs & termination materials decreased every year
  - Machinery costs were consistent year to year
- **Trials incorporating roller crimping**
  - NY4 – Same trends as NY2
  - NY3 – No real year to year changes



## Slide 26

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**CR1**     Added 'and Connecticut' - [@Aysha Tapp Ross] see what you think about the content, maybe too detailed for the slide, I can move to notes and try to trim the text on the slide itself

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-21T19:21:15.131

**CR1 0**    Could change to New England Demo Trial Takeaways if preferred

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-21T19:21:42.952

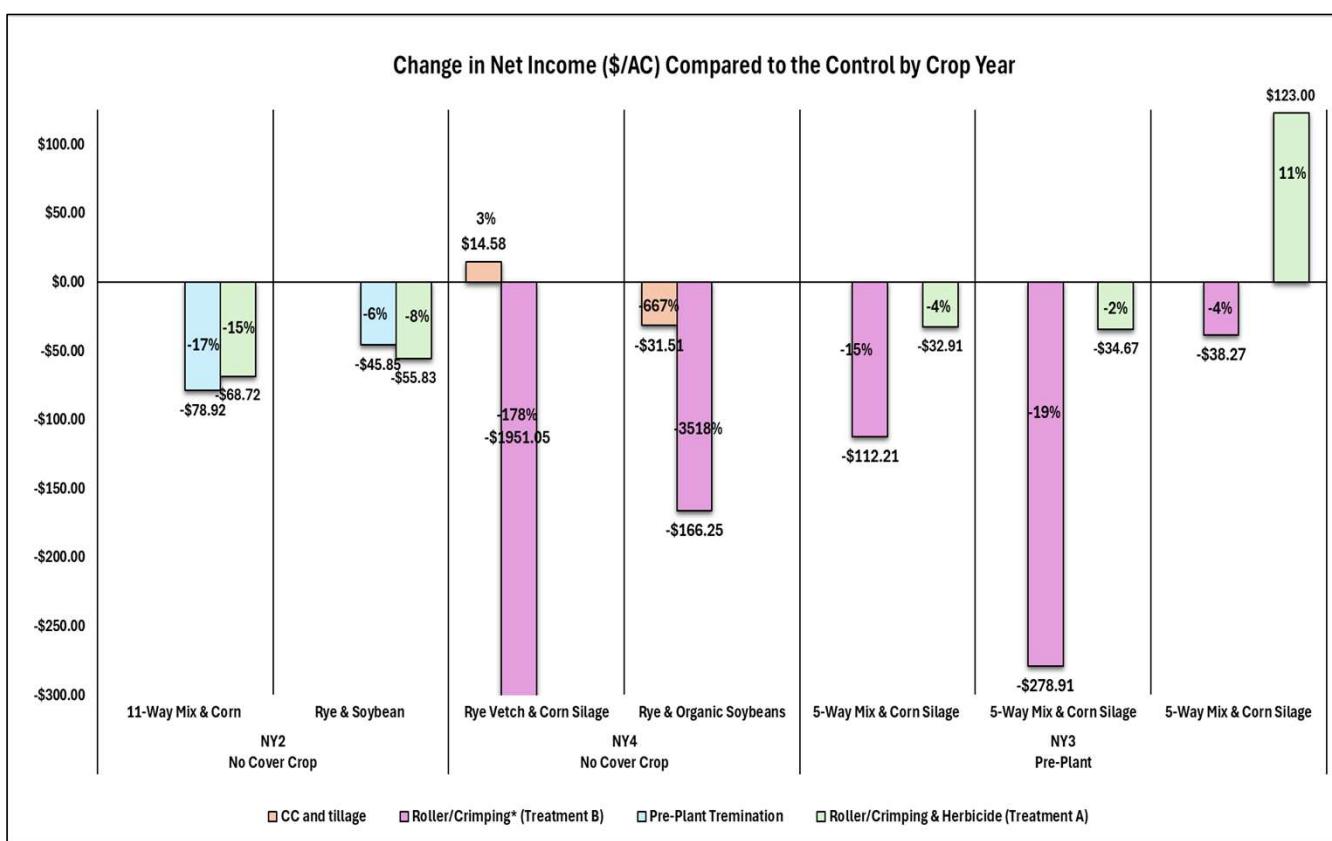
**AT1 1**    I would move it to notes and trim the text. Try to make short concise bullet points preferably in 20pt font

Aysha Tapp Ross, 2025-07-22T18:42:26.381

**CR1 2**    sounds good will do

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-22T19:59:43.293

# New York Results : Difference in Net Income (\$/ac) of Treatments compared to Control

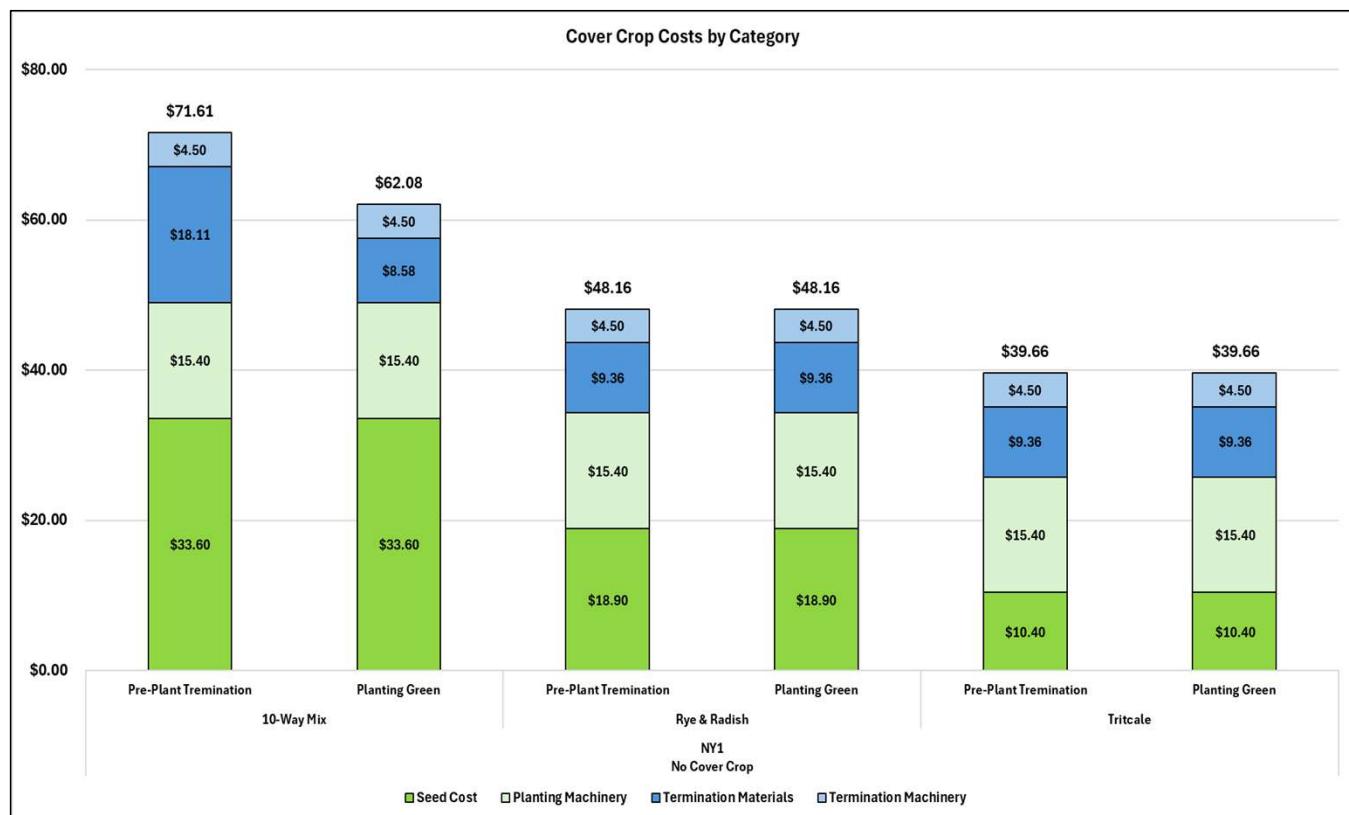


- Trials using pre-plant termination and planting green (NY2)
  - Even with cover crop cost improvement, still negative net incomes
- Trials incorporating roller/crimping
  - NY4 – Roller/Crimping just didn't work in that system
  - NY4 – Maybe tillage can work but inconsistent results
  - NY3 – Improvements using roller/Crimping, but still not as high as pre-plant termination

# Swede: Cover Crop Costs (\$/ac) by Treatment by Year

No cover crop as the control

- Overall
  - Cover crop costs continued to decrease each year
  - Seed cost improved
  - Operations timing found a groove in years 2 & 3
- 10-way Mix
  - The only difference was in the materials for termination
- Last 2 Years
  - All costs were the same, operations performed at different times



## Slide 28

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**CR1**     Added 'and Connecticut' - [@Aysha Tapp Ross] see what you think about the content, maybe too detailed for the slide, I can move to notes and try to trim the text on the slide itself

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-21T19:21:15.131

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Caro Roszell, 2025-07-21T19:21:42.952

**AT1 1**    I would move it to notes and trim the text. Try to make short concise bullet points preferably in 20pt font

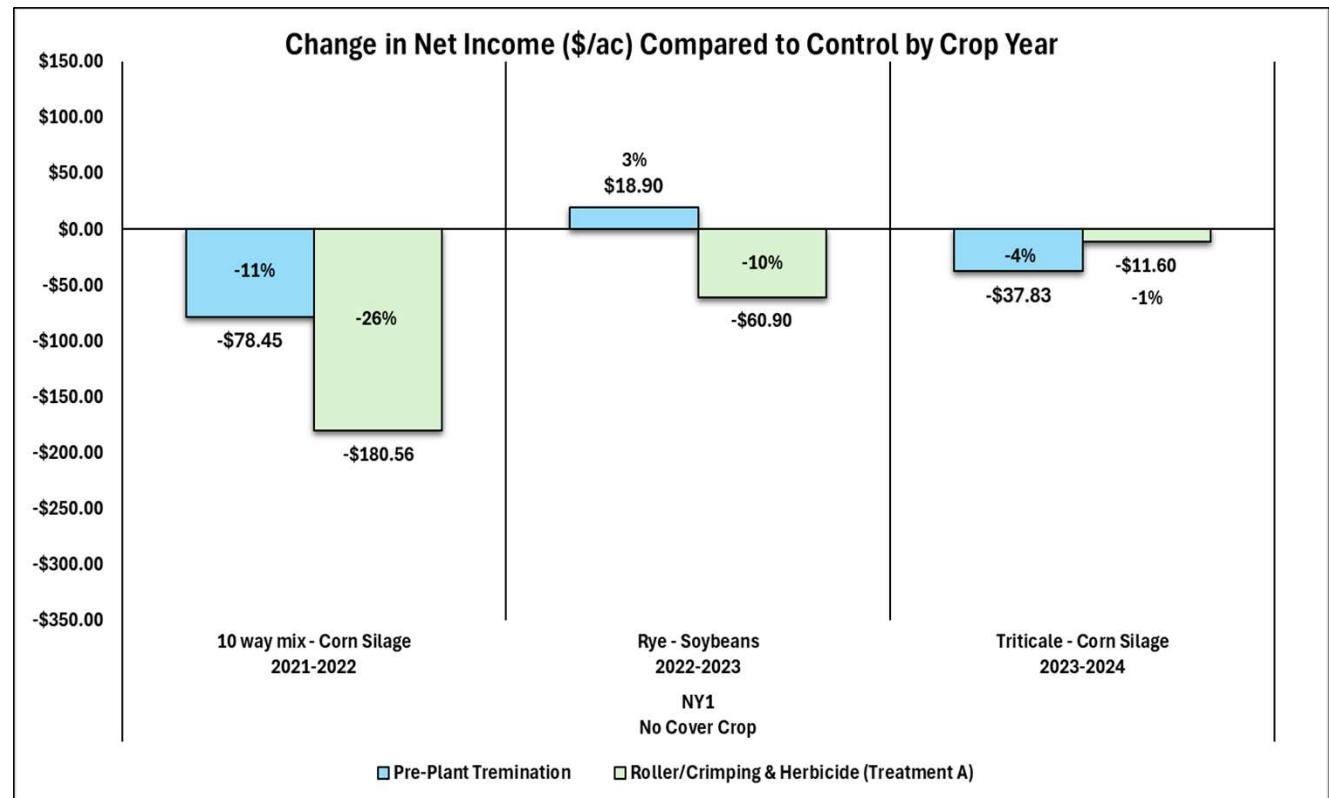
Aysha Tapp Ross, 2025-07-22T18:42:26.381

**CR1 2**    sounds good will do

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-22T19:59:43.293

# Swede: Difference in Net Income (\$/ac) of Treatments compared to No Cover Crop

- Pre-Plant Termination
  - Inconsistent net income results overall
  - Efficiency did improve each year
  - Yields were consistent with the Control
- Roller/Crimping
  - Net Income continued to improve
  - Yields improved in years 2 and 3
  - Year 3 had the highest yields for all treatments



## Slide 29

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**CR1**     Added 'and Connecticut' - [@Aysha Tapp Ross] see what you think about the content, maybe too detailed for the slide, I can move to notes and try to trim the text on the slide itself

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-21T19:21:15.131

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Aysha Tapp Ross, 2025-07-22T18:42:26.381

**CR1 2**    sounds good will do

Caro Roszell, 2025-07-22T19:59:43.293

# Economic Results Key Takeaways

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## Overarching takeaways:

- Cover crop economics heavily depend on the system and farmer
- There is economic potential for cover cropping, but we need time

## Biggest benefit:

- Pre-termination has great potential in some systems

## Biggest challenges:

- Learning curve for adoption is a major challenge, even for farmers with cover crop experience





# COVER CROP BIOMASS RESULTS



## Biomass based on Termination Timing

**Control (Fallow)**



**Cover Crop (Pre-plant Termination)**



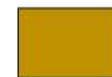
**Cover Crop (Planting Green)**



Taken 5/14/24 at Planting (Swede)

## Soil Moisture at Time of Planting Corn

Gary Swede Farms, LLC

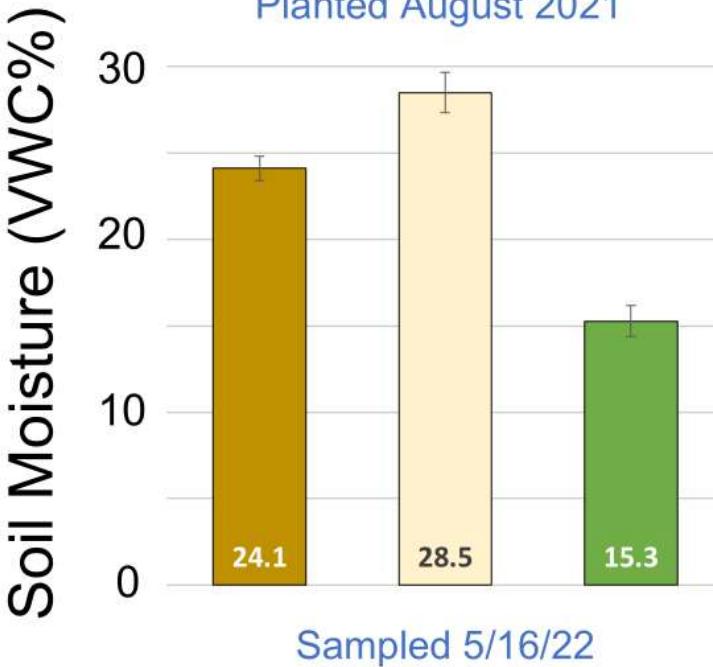
 No Cover

 Pre-Plant

 Plant Green

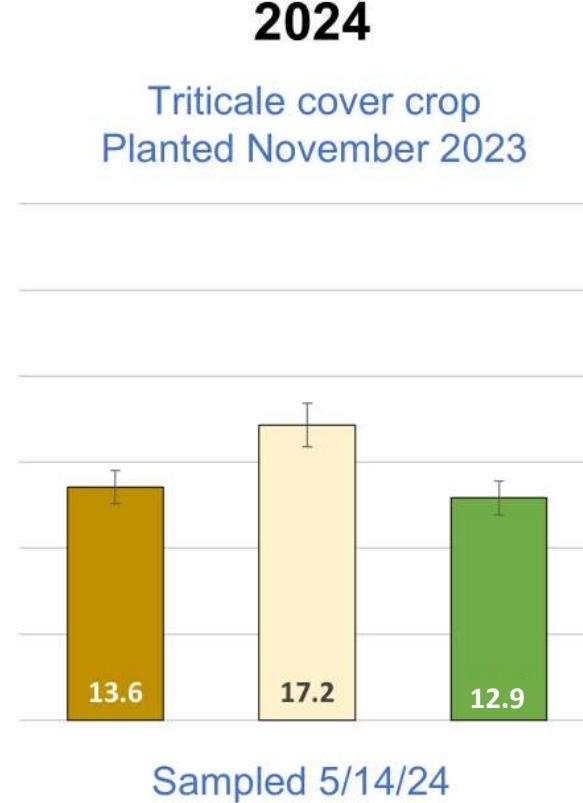
**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

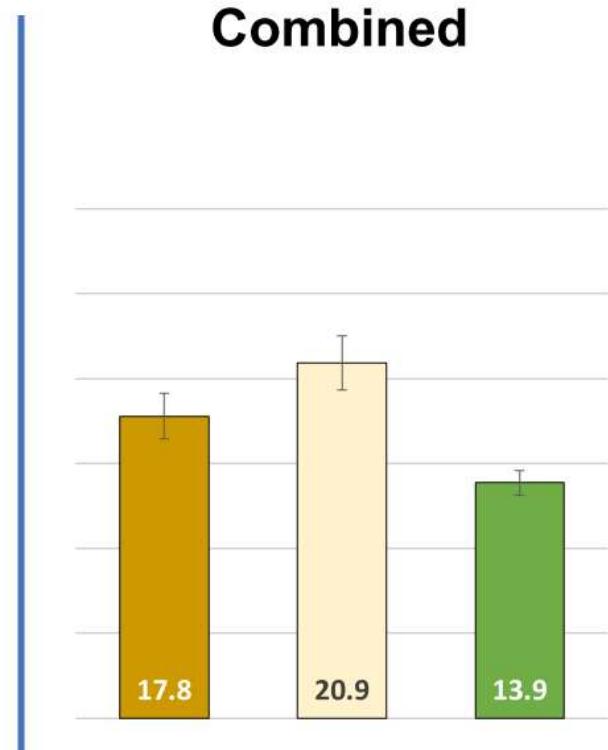


**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023



**Combined**



## Soil Temperature at Time of Planting Corn

Gary Swede Farms, LLC

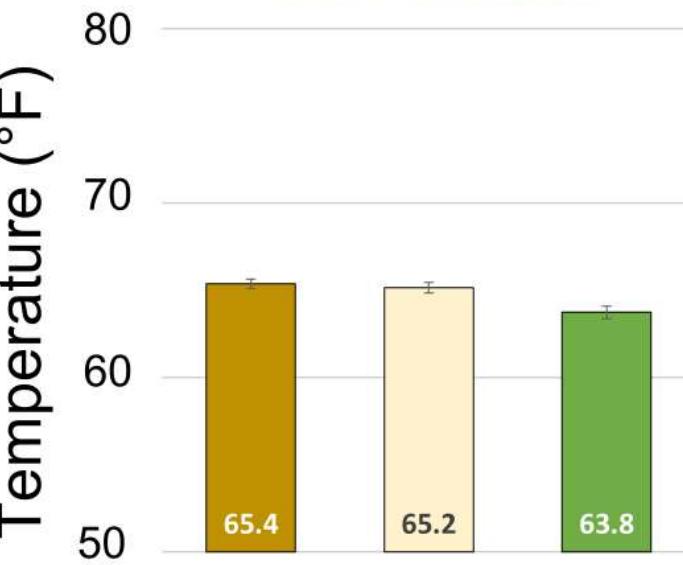
 No Cover

 Pre-Plant

 Plant Green

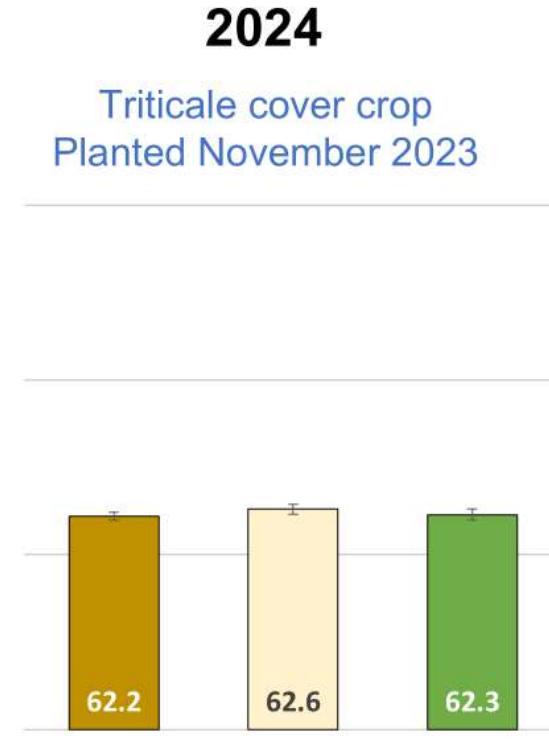
**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

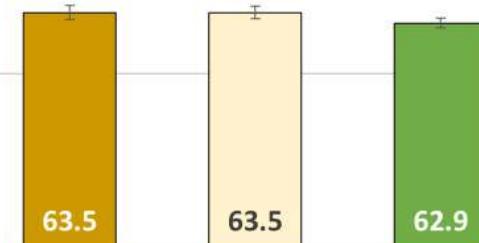


**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023



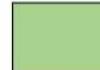
**Combined**



## Biomass based on Termination Timing

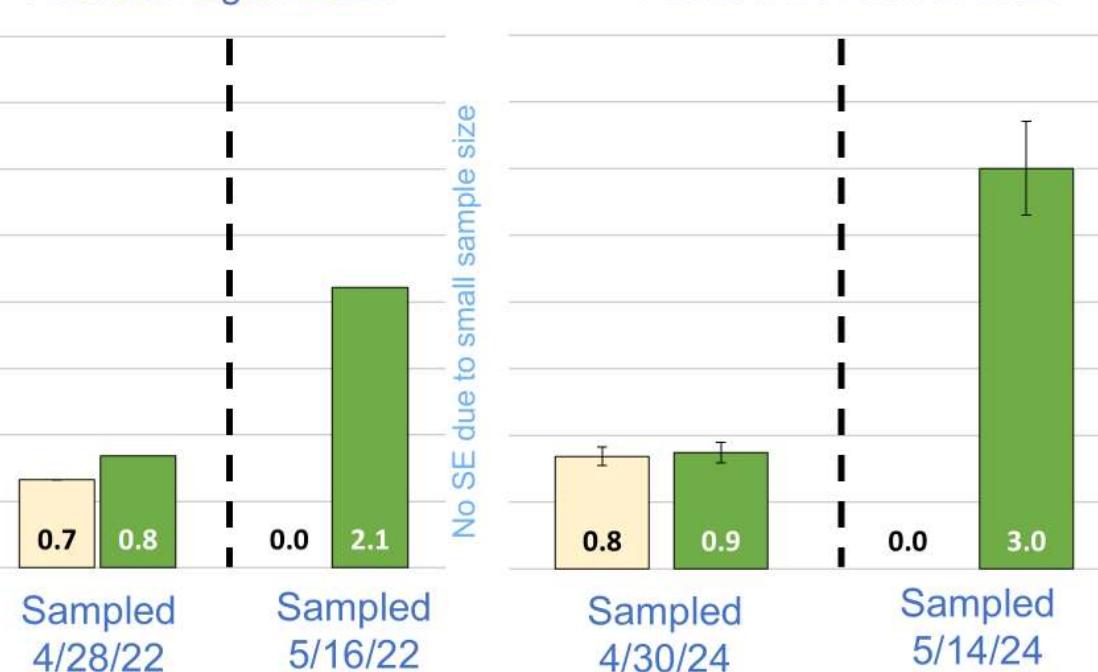
Gary Swede Farms, LLC



Pre-Plant  Plant Green 

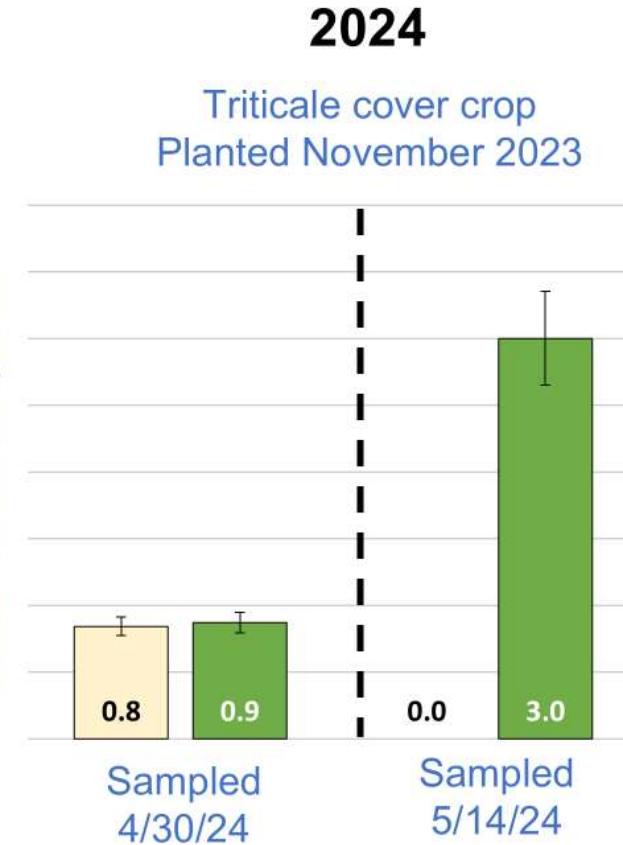
**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

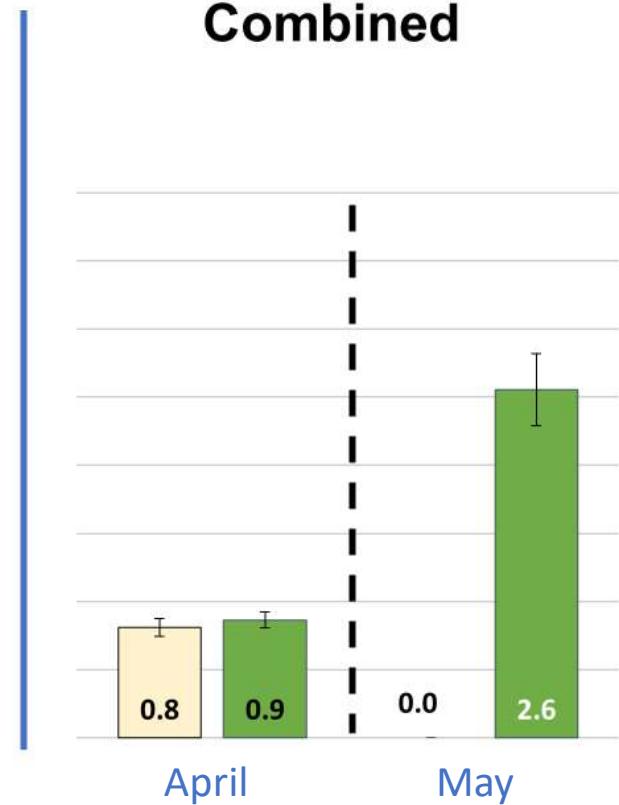


**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023



**Combined**

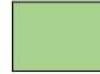


Biomass (tons/ac)

## Available N in Cover Crop by Termination Timing

Gary Swede Farms, LLC



Pre-Plant  Plant Green 

**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

Sampled  
4/28/22

41

56

Sampled  
5/16/22

0

102

**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023

Sampled  
4/30/24

33

32

Sampled  
5/14/24

0

89

**Combined**

April

35

37

May

0

96

Available N (lbs/ac)

200  
150  
100  
50  
0

No SE due to small sample size

## Carbon:Nitrogen Ratio of Cover Crop

Gary Swede Farms, LLC

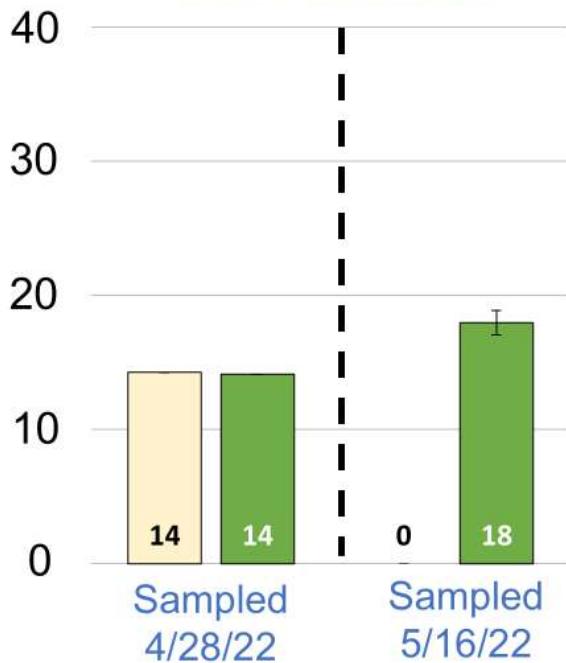


Pre-Plant  Plant Green

**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

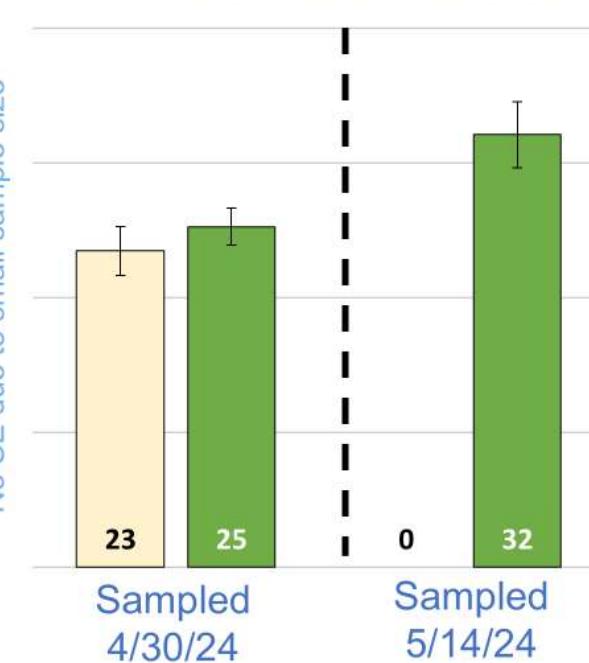
Carbon:Nitrogen Ratio



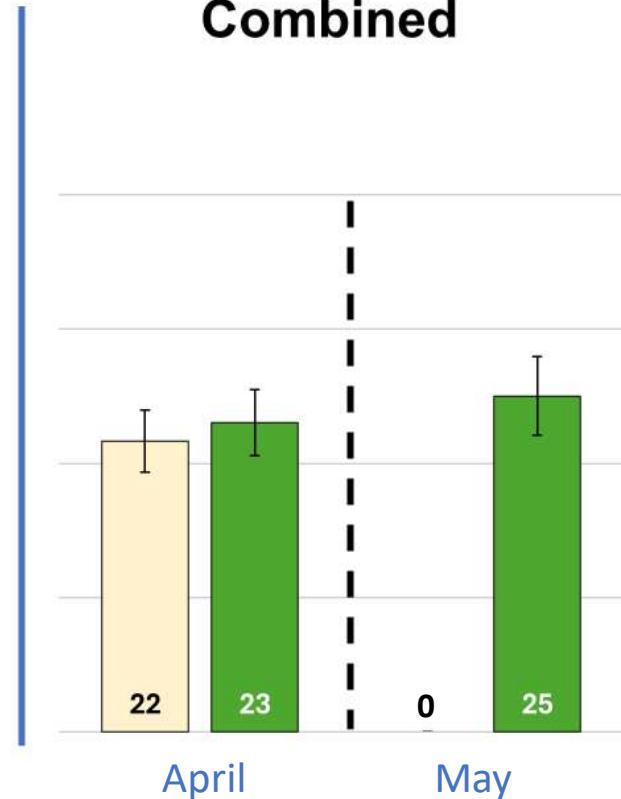
**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023

No SE due to small sample size



**Combined**



## Corn Yield based on Termination Timing

Gary Swede Farms, LLC

 No Cover

 Pre-Plant

 Plant Green

**2022**

11-way cover crop mix  
Planted August 2021

30

Yield (tons/ac)

24.9 24.2 22.6

Planted 5/12/22  
Harvested 9/19/22

**2024**

Triticale cover crop  
Planted November 2023

10

0

25.1 25.2 25.2

Planted 5/14/24  
Harvested 9/11/24

**Combined**

25.0 24.7 23.9



# New York Demo Trial Takeaways - Swede

## Overarching takeaways:

- Cover crops did not significantly change most laboratory soil health measurements within this 5-year trial
- Planting green had the fewest soil resource concerns identified by the In-Field Soil Health Assessment
- Planting green accumulated more cover crop biomass than pre-plant termination, and often had the lowest soil moisture in spring
- Planting Green had a lower net income than No Cover Crop every year
- The difference was smaller each subsequent year, and was only 1% less than No Cover Crop in the final year
- Pre-Plant Termination had a higher net income than No Cover Crops for one year



*"In a recent wet year, the best corn was where the cover crops were." - Jay Swede*

## Jay's perspective:

- The trial reinforced preference for pre-plant termination of cover crops
- The high amount of residue on the field at planting was a challenge with planting green



## Q&A + DISCUSSION

*Thank you!*

*Please get in touch with  
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CTucker@farmland.org*

*Aysha Tapp Ross, Soils Team Manager Nationally  
with questions or suggestions for us:  
ATappRoss@farmland.org*

*Join our mailing list,  
become a member!*

