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**News Release**

**Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative**

*For Immediate Release*

*February 10, 2014*

**Indiana Conservation Professionals and Producers Offered Advanced Soil Health Training**

Indianapolis, Ind. (February 10, 2014) -- Next month, eight Indiana workshops will offer advanced-level training on cover crops and cropping systems to conservation agency staff, producers and members of the private industry.

Indiana has long been recognized as the leader in soil health - visibly evident by widespread adoption of cropping systems that reduce soil disturbance, maximize residue, increase diversity, and provide continuous living roots.

Indiana's leadership was recently recognized by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) by a decision to move their summer board meetings to the landscape after 10-12 years of location in Washington, DC. In 2014, the meeting will be held in Indianapolis. According to Earl Garber, NACD president, Indiana is "on the forefront and cutting edge of soil health."

Given Indiana's trailblazing status in the field of conservation, it is not surprising that many of Indiana's conservation professionals and producers have moved beyond a basic understanding of soil health and how it relates to their operation and management recommendations. The Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI) is excited to partner with the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to offer advanced level courses for those ready to take the next step on their journey to soil health.

"We understand that conservation professionals as well as farmers and their advisors have similar needs when it comes to content - but their day to day work means they typically have different questions and needs when it comes to practical application of what they learn. So we've set up the workshops to cater to these different audiences. Same speakers, same information - Day 1 caters to conservation agencies and organizations. Day 2 caters to farmers and others in the ag industry," says Lisa Holscher, CCSI Soil Health Program Manager.

"For Day 2, we're hoping to attract a number of agronomists, seed dealers, and fertilizer plant managers in addition to farmers. After all, it's not just farmers who are highly involved in management strategies. We feel it's important to provide those professionals with the same information and content as their clients."

Advanced Cover Crops for conservation agency staff will be offered on March 10 in Vincennes, IN and on March 13 in Osgood, IN. This workshop is offered to farmers, landowners, and their advisors on March 11 in Vincennes and March 12 in Osgood. These workshops will include sessions on:

* selection of cover crops to address specific needs
* hands-on practice with cover crop selection tools
* management considerations - including pest control and nutrient needs
* root pits for on-site evaluation of cover crop benefits, including rooting depth (weather permitting)

Advanced Cropping Systems for conservation agency staff will be offered on March 17 in Lafontaine, IN and on March 19 in Rensselaer, IN. This workshop is offered to farmers, landowners, and their advisors on March 18 in Lafontaine and on March 20 in Rensselaer. This series of workshops will include sessions on:

* nutrient management in no-till/strip-till systems
* discussion of management strategies, including selection of shorter-season crops, potential herbicide impacts, pest scouting considerations, and grazing impacts
* hands-on review of equipment modifications
* setting up on-farm trials to help with management decisions

CEUs for Certified Crop Advisors will be requested. Training for conservation staff (Day 1) is free. There will be a registration fee of $10 for farmers and ag industry professionals (Day 2) Registration deadlines are 1 week before each event. Information and registration links are all available on CCSI's website at http://ccsin.iaswcd.org/?page\_id=655 .

For additional information, contact Lisa Holscher, Soil Health Program Manager at ccsi@iaswcd.org.

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