



NEWS RELEASE

Jan. 3, 2018

Getting Healthy: A New Year's Resolution—for Soil and for Business

If your soil could talk, here's how it would help you improve your business in the New Year

(ST. LOUIS) – As we prepare to ring in 2018, “getting healthy” will be a common New Year’s Resolution among millions of people. But for farmers, the New Year is also an opportunity to set goals for getting their soil healthy, a practice taking on elevated importance for protecting natural resources, and helping farmers manage extreme weather, increase profitability and sequester carbon.

The [Soil Health Partnership](#) has developed the Top 5 Resolutions for 2018, from your soil’s point of view:

- 1. Watch my nutrient intake.** Using science-based nutrient management strategies on the farm can help curb unwanted loss and improve farm economics. Split nitrogen (N) fertilizer applications, or dividing total nitrogen application into two or more treatments per year, can help growers enhance nutrient efficiency, promote optimum yields and protect the environment.
[PHOTO: Wes and Roger Zylstra, SHP farmers in Lynville, Iowa, are leaders in advanced nutrient management.](#)
- 2. Cover new ground.** Growing cover crops in the winter, like grasses and legumes, helps hold the soil in place, reducing erosion, while improving use of water and many ag inputs. These crops make the soil more resilient to drought and resistant to flooding. They help reduce nutrient loss by taking up what’s left on the field between growing seasons – and provide beneficial habitat for migratory birds and pollinators.
[PHOTO: Brent Bible inspects a radish, a cover crop he grows on his farm in Clarks Hill, Ind.](#)
- 3. Adopt healthier habits.** On the farm, that may mean less intensive tillage! Reducing or eliminating the practice of turning over the soil between growing seasons is one proven method of restoring soil health that can help the bottom line. Adopting strip-till can be like getting a new pair of walking shoes to set you on a new path.
[PHOTO: This Wisconsin SHP farm uses strip-till, a less intensive method](#)
- 4. Focus on what matters.** In this case, organic matter! Adding cover crop roots and disturbing the soil less through tillage can help restore the lively ecosystem of organisms your crops and soil crave. Earthworms, microscopic bacteria and fungi, and a host of other organisms produce structure and nutrients for plants to grow.
[Photo: Earthworms break down plant residues and create pores in the soil that allow other soil biology to thrive.](#)

5. **Save for the future.** Farmers are beginning to understand that improving soil health is like putting money in the bank. Data collected on the Soil Health Partnership's 111 farms is starting to show that taking care of the farm's foundation can pay big dividends over time, through optimal yields, more resilience to extreme weather, and more efficient use of inputs like fertilizer.

[PHOTO: SHP farmer Bret Pierce is a steward of the land for future generations, farming in Woodward, Iowa. \(Pictured with daughter, Laura\)](#)

An initiative of the National Corn Growers Association, the Soil Health Partnership is a data-driven program working to quantify the benefits of practices that support soil health from an economic as well as environmental standpoint.

About the Soil Health Partnership

The Soil Health Partnership is a farmer-led initiative that fosters transformation in agriculture through improved soil health, benefiting both farmer profitability and the environment. With more than 100 working farms enrolled in 12 states, the SHP tests, measures and advances progressive farm management practices that will enhance sustainability and farm economics for generations to come. SHP brings together diverse partners to work towards common goals. At least a ten-year scientific program administered by the National Corn Growers Association, the SHP's vision is driven by initial and continuing funding and guidance from NCGA, Monsanto, the Walton Family Foundation, the Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, General Mills, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, National Wheat Foundation, Pisces Foundation and USDA, with technical support from The Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund.

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