

Choctawhatchee, Pea, and Yellow Rivers Watersheds of Alabama

FARM #28

Myron Johnson runs a 2,000-acre operation in Henry County, Alabama, with his wife. Their operation is broken down into 1,400 acres of row crops, including corn, cotton and peanuts; 400 acres for pasture; and 200 acres of grass and hay for his cattle. Since 2010, Myron has been practicing strip-till with cover crops.

Myron is a fourth-generation farmer who knows the benefits of managing his operation for soil health. “I can visually see the soil is healthier than it had been in the past. My increased crop yields confirm that fact,” he said.

When Myron began using cover crops, he used cereal rye as his base. He now uses triticale, as it’s easier for him to produce his own seed. Occasionally, he’ll mix the triticale with oats or wheat.

Myron’s operation is a dry-land operation and, with water being 600-700 feet deep, it’s too expensive to drill for water. “We were looking for a way to capture moisture and conserve it, and that’s a big thing that cover crops offer you,” he said. “So that was one of the things that really had me looking strongly at doing it.”

As he expected, his soil health practices have significantly improved his soil’s ability to hold and infiltrate water. This benefit has led to a decrease in erosion off his operation as well. “This past winter, we had a lot of rainfall, and you can see the fields that have cover. If you go by them when the water’s running off the field, and it’s got to rain a lot for it to run out of a cover crop field, it’s going to be clear water,” he said.

Another critical benefit is the cover crops’ ability to keep his ground cooler - a benefit that’s extremely important for his peanuts. “Soil temperature’s a big deal when it comes to peanut production, and the covers shade the ground,” Myron said. “So, once you get past making a stand, now we’re talking about the real benefits of the covers, which are tremendous. Conventional doesn’t have anything to offer there.”



Myron is looking forward to what the future holds for agriculture. “I’m kind of excited about what’s new. We live, probably, in some of the best times in agriculture, as far as I’m concerned.”

View Myron’s interview:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riOsaPd8I_Y

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