Building Soil Health Through Ag Service Provider Education

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My Funding

- Northeast SARE Professional Development
- UME Ag Profitability & Sustainability Impact Team
- …and a couple others
What is SARE?

Grants to advance new ideas in sustainable agriculture

Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
My job

- Provide professional development for ag service providers (ASPs)
- Help with grants and grant writing
- To help ASPs:
  - Implement education programs about sustainable agriculture based on adult learning concepts
  - Document outcomes from their education programs
  - Increase their success in obtaining external program funding
Needs Assessment

- Small Group Discussions
- Formal Survey
- Polls

Lead to...

- 3 year plan to NE SARE
  - 1-3 primary topics
  - Advisory committee
Top Ranked Topics

- Integrated Pest Management
- Organic Production
- Alternative/Renewable Farm Energy
- And the winner:

Soil Health
Project goals

- A larger group of ASPs will incorporate soil health concepts into their current programming and advising.

- A smaller groups of ASPs will develop and offer in-depth programming in soil health concepts to their clientele, including workshops, webinars, presentations, and/or individual consultations.
Most training is targeted at this audience, composed primarily of these subgroups.

ASPs will be invited to apply for membership in this group; members will have access to additional training and demo plots but will be required to submit documentation of their related work.

This group will attend a regional cover crops conference in Winter ’16 (all expenses paid) and will be responsible for follow-up activities.

Training of this group is the indirect goal of the project; field days will also be open to this group.

Building Soil Health in Maryland Through Agricultural Service Provider Education

Maryland Agricultural Service Providers

CCAs

UMD Extension

Non-profits

MDA

Group of 20-30

Group of 6-8

SC D/NRC S

Farmers/Producers
Topic timeline

- The importance and process of soil quality testing and evaluation (2015)
- No Till/Reduced Till (2015-2016)
- Cover Crops (Year 2016-2017)
- The benefits of enrolling in the Maryland Cover Crop Incentive program
- How to gain the most soil health benefits from cover crops, beyond the minimum requirements of the MD Cover Crop Incentive Program, including multi-species mixes
- Other related topics
  - Nutrient Management
  - Conservation Crop Rotation
  - Mulching
  - Pest Management
Products

- UMD Extension website
  - Series of three short facts sheets
  - A longer bulletin
  - A video
- A Google group for discussion and announcements
- Several series of soil health workshops will be offered to Ag Service Providers, each with a focus on a different aspect of evaluation and management
- 2016 Cover Crops for Soil Health Training
  - Participants will host a workshop series
- Four field-based workshops each year
- Sessions in the annual conferences of MD Association of County Ag Agents and Future Harvest
- A continuing education class at a community college
Evaluation

- SARE funds outcomes
- Initial and annual survey
  - Soil health knowledge
  - Confidence teaching
  - Related teaching/consultation activities
Questions?

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