

# Grassland Oregon Blog

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Part 5 of our 5-part sustainability blog series.

## Time is your enemy – It's time to GO

By Duane Klundt

In the last 30 years, agricultural producers have made substantial efficiency improvements. According to the recent Food Dialogues Sustainability Report, US soybean producers have decreased water use by 33 percent, greenhouse gas emissions by 44 percent and soil loss by 47 percent – all while improving yields by 46 percent. They weren't alone, with corn producers improving yields by 64 percent, while decreasing greenhouse emission by 36 percent, soil loss by 68% and energy to produce a bushel of corn by 44 percent.



From beef and dairy sectors to pigs and poultry, agriculture is moving in the right direction.

### **But there's room for improvement**

Continuous research into improved management practices, modern technology and innovative plant breeding has given the industry the tools it needs to become more efficient while protecting the environment for a sustainable future. However, there's still room for improvement.

According to a separate study by the Economic Research Service (ERS), conservation practices and adoption rates still vary widely by crop and region. Practices like no-till, strip-till, using multiple nutrient management practices and incorporating cover crops help reduce nitrogen leaching, while improving soil structure and fertility.

However, researchers found that only close to 40 percent of corn, soybean, wheat and cotton were managed with conservational cultivation. An additional 40 percent weren't being managed with spilt nitrogen fertilizer application to reduce runoff, and another 20 percent of those analysed were found to be using fall application. While data from 2011 used for the study revealed only 2 percent of total cropland (6.8 million acres) was utilizing cover crops, the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture reported only 3 percent (10.3 million acres) was utilizing cover crops. It should be noted improvements have been made since then that will be better understood when data from the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture is released, however, conservation practices are still being underutilized.

The need to improve doesn't just sit on the shoulders of production agriculture. In 2005, researchers published a report in the journal of Environmental Management, estimating more than 40 million acres of land in the US to be cultivated with turfgrass. As urban and suburban areas continue to edge outwards into rural areas, the acreage of turfgrass expansion will continue to rapidly increase – further driving the need for water and nutrient conservation.

### **Time is your enemy**

As we navigate the waters of a point in time where consumer pressure for responsible and transparent agricultural practice is at an all time high, there is an abundance of opportunities for industry stakeholders embracing a sustainable future.

### **However, time is of the essence.**

Producers and companies at the forefront of the sustainable movement have the opportunity to capitalize on cost of production savings and premiums for being able to prove they are making responsible management decisions.

Those waiting or resisting to make change are putting the future of their land and natural resources at risk by not looking at the long-term production picture. They are also risking customer relationships and market shares as the industry continues to move forward.

### **It's time to GO**

It's a Journey – Let's 

No matter where you are on your sustainability journey, it is important to remember there is no end point. As the agricultural industry faces new environmental, social and political challenges, we must continue our mission to rise to future challenges.

Nonstop research and innovation will be vital to the future of the agricultural industry – a commitment of GO Seed. As your partner in sustainability, we promise to continue providing **novel solutions for growing concerns** for tomorrow and for 50 years from now.

Through the combination of our value-added tools and your dedication to responsible management practices, we can achieve a sustainable future together.

**The time to begin is now. Are you ready to GO?**



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