

Bluestem Breezes
Karaline Mayer
April 25, 2016

Cover Crops Decision Tool

I am receiving more inquiries about using alternative forages. There is now a decision tool available online for Kansas producers interested in utilizing cover crops. K-State Specialists DeAnn Presley and Peter Tomlinson were instrumental in adapting the tool to fit Kansas' needs. For more information, please read their article below:

Cover crops are a complex topic in many ways. There are lots of choices, each with different strengths and weaknesses, and each suited best for different goals and field conditions. That's where an interactive web site can be a big help.

There are dozens of cover crop options, and you'll need to decide which one – or which combination of species – you'd like to use on each field you have in mind.

To make that decision, you need to take into account what you'd like to accomplish with the cover crops, what cash crops the cover crops will be sandwiched between, the hardiness of the various cover crop options for your area, the soil conditions of the field, and much more.

It's not an easy decision. Your seed supplier can be a big help, but you might like to examine all the options yourself before placing your seed order.

One of the most useful online tools for evaluating cover crop options for specific situations and locations is the Midwest Cover Crops Council Decision Tool. Kansas has now been added to this online resource.

The address of the decision tool is: <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/selectorINTRO.html>

When you open that page, click on the link that reads "Go to the Cover Crop Decision Tool-Field Crops." That will take you to the page where you start to enter your field-specific information.

You'll find this tool will give you much more than just a list of cover crop species that we know will work in Kansas. It's an interactive tool. Producers enter some information specific to their own operation, and the web site then selects some of the best cover crop options for that localized situation.

The web site will shade out the period of time during the year when the cash crop will be growing, and will show you when each of the cover crops it selects for you can or should be planted. Finally, you can click on each of the cover crops selected to get more information about it, including seeding rates and depths and much, much more.

Funding for the development of the Kansas portion of this web site came from the Kansas Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops and the Division of Conservation from the Kansas

Department of Agriculture. DeAnn Presley is on the Midwest Cover Crops Council board of directors.

For additional information, visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out wabaunsee.ksu.edu.