Our Experiences with Cover Crops & No-Till Vegetable Production in Southern Illinois

Nathan Johanning, University of Illinois Extension
Benefits of No-till Production

• Decreased Erosion
  – Especially important on Highly Erodible Soils
• Better soil structure/aggregate stability
• Accumulation of soil organic matter
• Increased water infiltration
• Tillage/cultivation is not exposing new weed seeds
• Fewer decrease on fuel/equipment expenses

*Remember soil benefits are long term benefits!!*
Challenges of No-till Production

• Finding/building equipment that is “No-till Ready”
• Managing Weeds
• Managing residue and overwintering pests
  – Increased need for good crop rotation
• Understanding field management strategies
• No-till production is not suited for all vegetable crops equally
• “But you have to work the ground!”
Mainly Silt Loam Soil, sloping, lower OM (~1.5-2.5%)
Cover Crops Species

- At first...wheat (cover crop or double crop)
- Cereal Rye
- Radish & Crimson Clover + Cereal Rye
- Sorghum Sudan + Cereal Rye
Cereal Rye - 120 lbs/A
Questions?
Thank You!

Nathan Johanning
Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms
University of Illinois Extension
402 Ava Rd.
Murphysboro, IL 62966
njohann@illinois.edu
(618)687-1727