

The Dirt on Soil Health: Investing Below the Surface

Estadt, M.¹; Griffith, M.²; Badertscher, M.³; Barker, F.⁴; Brown, C.⁵; Chanon, A.⁶; Cochran, R.⁷; Corboy, T.⁸; Culman, S.⁹; Fisher, B.¹⁰; Fulton, J.¹¹; Hartschuh, J.¹²; Hawkins, E.¹³; Karhoff, S.¹⁴; LaBarge, G.¹⁵; Moneymaker, B.¹⁶; Neal, N.L.¹⁷; Noggle, S.¹⁸; Nye, L.¹⁹; Scheckelhoff, B.²⁰; Zoller, C.²¹

Introduction

Soil health is an increasingly important topic of interest to agricultural producers in Ohio. The Ohio State University Extension's Agronomics Crops Team formed an educational committee to plan and deliver information on this topic. The committee's first effort was a virtual programming on this subject.

Educational Goals and Objectives

The main objectives of the webinar series included:

- Improve participants' understanding of soil health;
- Improve participants' awareness of research-based information available to inform soil health assessment and management;
- Provide training and resources to enable producers to identify practices they can implement to improve soil health on their farms;
- Identify resource and educational needs related to soil health for the committee to focus on delivering in the future to help producers achieve their soil health goals.

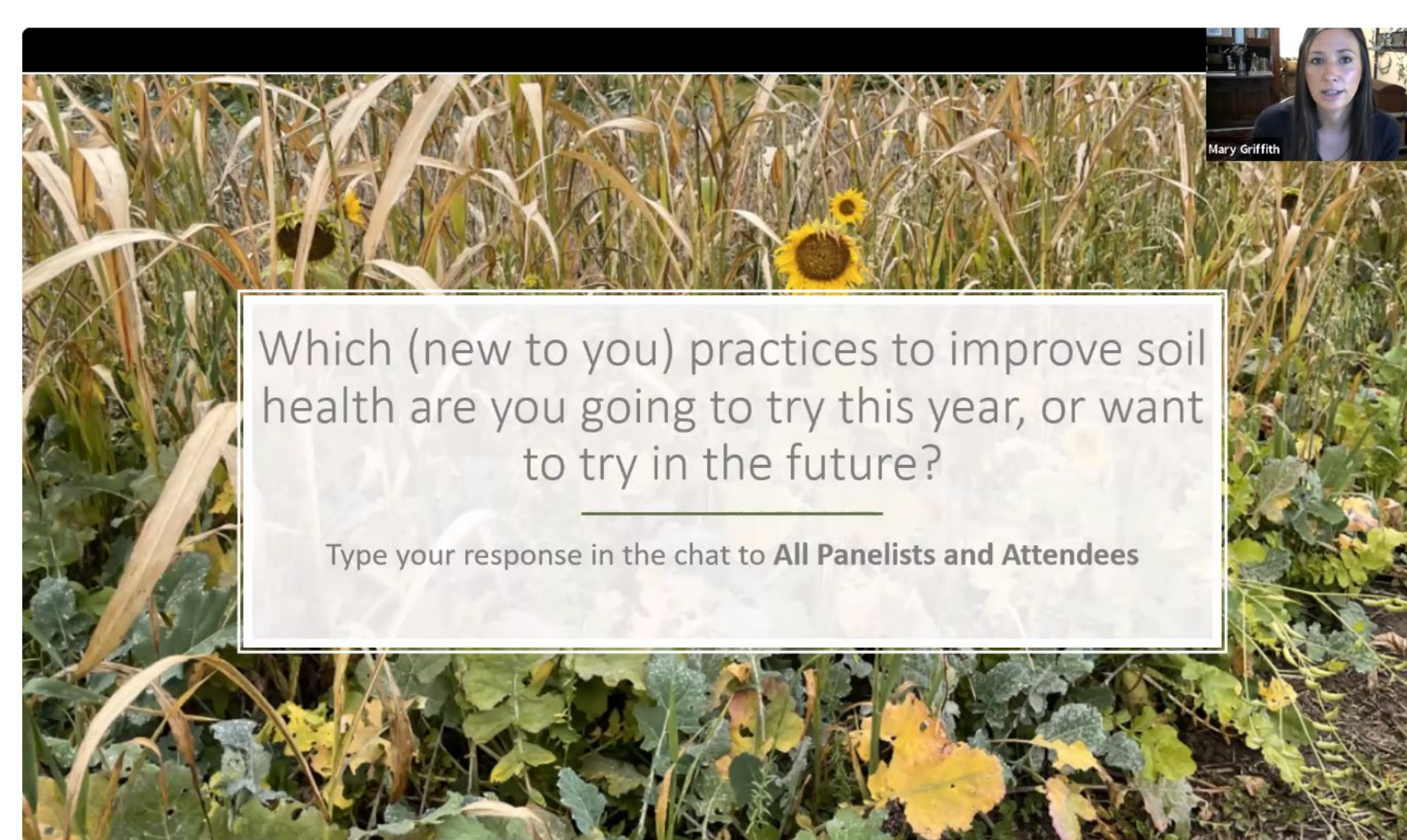
Course Description

Eight live sessions were held on a weekly basis over Zoom webinar, with recordings available to registrants who could not attend live. Session titles included:

- Does It Pay to Improve Soil Health on Your Farm?
- What Can Soil Health Tests Tell You?
- Can Improving Soil Health Improve Yield?
- Cover Crop Management for Soil Health
- Compaction Solutions
- Using Ohio Data and Research to Improve Soil Health,
- What's the Return on Investing in Soil Health?
- Programs and Funding to Support Soil Health

Teaching Methods and Course Delivery

The series included a diverse range of guest speakers including academics, farmers, government agencies, and industry representatives. Several sessions were co-presented by academics and farmers with the goal of providing research-based information with practical perspectives. The first half of each session was a prepared presentation delivered by a guest speaker, with the entire second half of each session devoted to Q&A between the audience and guest speaker.



Programs were designed to be interactive with Q&A using chat and polls

Comments about this delivery method included:

"I appreciate the interaction with academics and growers alike."

"Very useful discussion involving both researcher and farmer about practical issues."

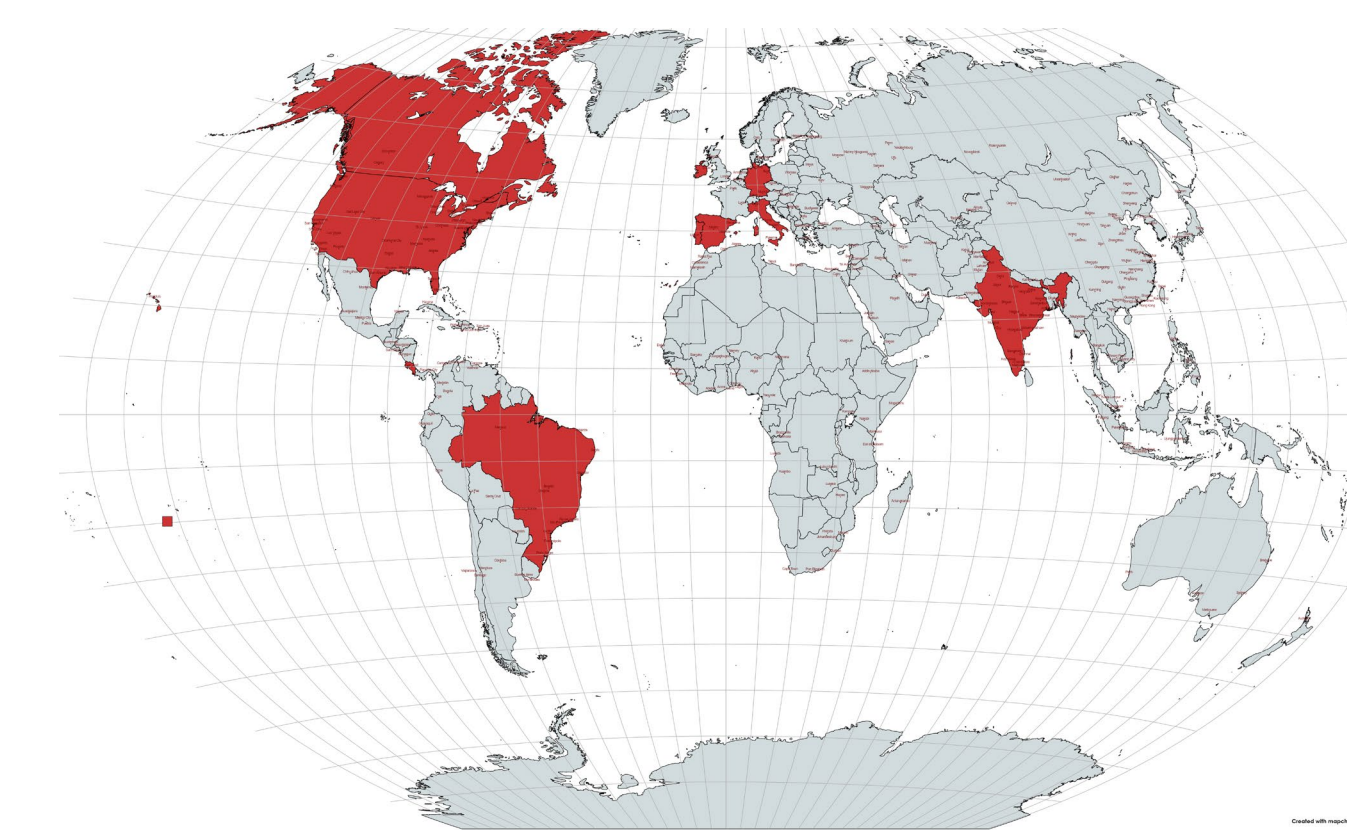
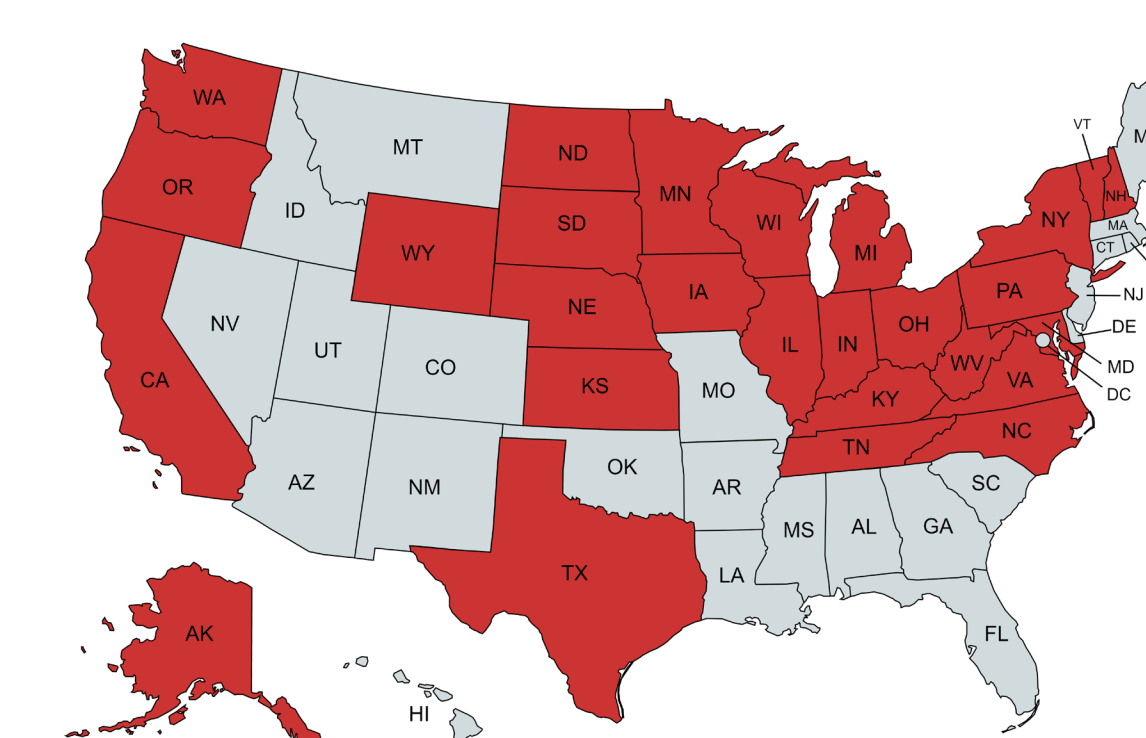
"The webinar blends real world perspective with academic research. It all sounds good until you try it on a real farm. [The farmer] brought that side of the research out."



All sessions were recorded and were available online soon after live program.

Results and Impact Statements

Eight sessions were attended live by 1,517 total attendees (average 190/session), including participants from 72 of Ohio's 88 counties, 27 US States, and 12 countries. Each live session was recorded, and recordings were made available to all who registered and could not attend the live sessions. Total registration for the webinar series was 2,858 (average 357/session). The recorded sessions have 1,447 views to date (average 181 views/session to date).



At the end of each session a voluntary program evaluation was administered. 556 responses have been received. 95.3% of respondents reported that they learned new information as a result of attending, and 88.7% reported that they plan to use the information they learned to improve soil health on their farm. Direct quotes from attendees include:



- 1)estadt.3@osu.edu; 2) griffith.483@osu.edu;
- 3)badertscher.4@osu.edu; 4)barker.41@osu.edu;
- 5)brown.1888@osu.edu; 6) chanon.1@osu.edu;
- 7)Cochran.474@osu.edu; 8)corboy.3@osu.edu;
- 9)culman.2@osu.edu; 10) fisher.1466@osu.edu
- 11)fulton.20@osu.edu; 12) hartschuh.11@osu.edu;
- 13)hawkins.301@osu.edu; 14) karhoff.41@osu.edu;
- 15)labarge.1@osu.edu; 16)moneymaker.4@osu.edu;
- 17)neal.331@osu.edu; 18)noggle.17@osu.edu; 19) nye.1@osu.edu;
- 20) scheckelhoff.11@osu.edu; 21) zoller.1@osu.edu

To view the series of webinars, scan this code



The Department of Extension
Agriculture and Natural Resources

