

# Community Based Collaborative Effort to Aid Farmers in Battling Climate Change

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## Background

The goal of this effort to improve knowledge and breakdown financial barriers of utilizing cover crops in rural areas with small scale production. In Gadsden County, Florida, USA, we use a collaborative approach through coordination with many agencies, to help landowners implement cover cropping in their farming operations.

Activities include educating farmers on the use of cover crops, instruction on cover crop selections, based, in part, on Extension field demonstrations, providing cost-share for best management farming practices (BMPs), and providing access to three no-till seed/grain drills for farmers via low-cost rental.

County provided drill rentals allow over 1000 acres (400 ha), in small land holdings to be seeded in cover crops each year. These small land acreages would normally have been left fallow

Additionally, a BMP cost share program, through Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Office of Ag Water Policy, aids large scale farms to purchase no-till grain drills to implement conservation BMP's.

This collaborative team works closely to influence a greater number of farmers to understand the value of cover cropping for their farming operations and to implement another useful climate-smart tool for their toolbox.



**Local farmer with county rented 7-foot seed drill, planting winter cover crops over peanut fields**  
*Photo Credit: Robbie Jones*

## Collaboration

### UF/IFAS and FAMU Extension Gadsden County

- Provide educational programs to landowners
- Field site consultations
- Site planning
- Coordinate collaborative work between partners

### UF/IFAS North Florida Research & Education Center

- Demo plot site
- Extension specialist trials and variety recommendations
- Forage and crop fertilization expertise

### Gadsden County Soil and Water Conservation District

- Seed drill and land aerator rental program
- Financial support for educational programs

### FDACS, Office of Ag Water Policy

- BMP cost share programs
- BMP Technician
- Water conservation expertise

### USDA NRCS

- Cost share programs
- Conservation planning
- Nutrient management plan support



**Forage tour of cool season field demonstration**  
*Photo Credit: Danielle S. Williams*

## Tools Provided

- Winter forage demo plot at the NFREC Quincy
- Summer forage demo plot at the NFREC Quincy
- Wildlife field demos at local landowners
- Forage field tour in March 2022
- Two 7-foot seed drills
- One 10-foot seed drill
- One land aerator
- Three workshop presentations to local landowners
- Annual cover cropping variety recommendations

## Outcomes and Impact

- A new seven-foot seed drill was purchased for rental between the Gadsden Soil and Water Conservation District and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This is the **First** partnership program in the state.
- A total of 15 test varieties were planted in the 2022 Demo Plots. Eleven varieties in the cool season and four varieties in the warm season demo plots
- A total of 65 farmers and ranchers visited the forage demo plots
- 4 wildlife demonstration plots were planted at local landowner wildlife areas
- 19 landowners rented the no till seed drills to plant 616 acres of cover crops in 2022  
*(drills were not available in spring 2022 due to maintenance repair)*
- In 2022, the national average for custom no-till planting was \$23.00 per acre. This saved an estimated \$6,708 for 2022 for Gadsden County landowners, compared to hiring custom seed planting for their cover crops.

## Contact Info

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