

HENNEPIN COUNTY

Soil health incentive program



Hennepin County has funding and support to promote soil health. Effective practices such as planting cover crops and reducing tillage are eligible for the new soil health incentive program. Farmers who improve soil health see many benefits: stabilized soils, improved soil fertility, reduced need for inputs, and yields become more consistent and sustainable over time.

There are several ways to improve soil health, and every farm is different – what’s right for one farm might not be right for the one next door. Three common ways are reducing tillage, adding cover crops, and adding diversity to the crop rotation.

Basic participation requirements for all participants

- Provide photo documentation and analysis of progress during program participation
- Soil testing and analysis before, during, and after participation (paid by the program)
- Program meeting with other participants to share lessons-learned and troubleshoot challenges
- Work with county staff to develop and follow a site-specific Soil Health Improvement Plan that will guide practices that are eligible for incentive payments

Type of soil health practice	Incentive payments (per acre per year)	Operation, maintenance, and reporting requirements
Cover crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single species 1 year: \$35 • Multi-species 1 year: \$50 • Single species 3 years: \$45 • Multi-species 3 years: \$60 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing season documentation of cover crop growth • Records related to seeding and termination
Tillage practices RT=reduce till ST=Strip till NT=No till	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RT 1 year: \$15 • ST 1 year: \$20 • NT 1 year: \$25 • RT 3 years: \$20 • ST 3 years: \$25 • NT 3 years: \$30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tillage tool inspection • Records related to passes and timing • Field verification of residue
Crop rotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic rotation organic or non-organic \$13 • Specialty crop organic or non-organic \$30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The crop rotation shall include a minimum of two different crops; a cover crop is considered a different crop. • Evaluate the rotation and the crop sequence to determine if the planning system is meeting the planned purposes.

Eligible recipients

Any Hennepin County farmland landowner or farm operator (someone who produces an agricultural produce for a market) can initiate a project

Application timeline

Continuous – participants must sign a form affirming desire to participate before being program eligible

Landowner match

Incentive payments are intended to reduce, but not eliminate the risk of trying something new – you very likely will have additional operational costs, but there is not required “match” in order to receive the incentive payment.

Other notes and considerations:

- Contract amounts may be limited by interest in the program and funding available to the incentive program
- Incentive payments are intended to reduce risk of the implementation of soil health practices listed above that will have environmental benefit to soil and water resources – they will not be paid to support “status quo” practices of crop systems that already exist. Hennepin County staff have the sole discretion to determine if a proposed project represents an operational change warranting an incentive payment.
- Incentive payments can be stacked with other State or Federal programing when applicable.
- In a case where the farmland owner and the farmland operator are different, both people will need to be aware of and supportive of a project.

Contact us today

Staff is available to help you with best soil health practices and answer any questions related to the grant and application process.

Learn more at hennepin.us or contact Kevin Ellis, kevin.ellis@hennepin.us or 612-382-3956

Project timeline

Seeing the operational and financial benefits of building soil health takes time – we strongly encourage making at least a three-year commitment to trying new practices, but minimum contract length is one year.

Reporting requirements

- One growing season check-in to review plan, discuss any necessary adjustments
- One post-harvest check-in to review challenges and opportunities

