

The Power Behind Crop Rotations



**A Guide for
Producers**



Crop Rotations

The Lost Art

A diverse crop rotation system consists of growing different kinds of crops in planned sequences. This contrasts with the use of only one or two crops on all acres or haphazardly varying crop acreage ratios and sequences without regard for agronomic and environmental factors.

Historically, rotations have been much more diverse than they are at the present time. This loss of diversity was due to a myriad of economic driving factors including farm program characteristics; mechanization; development of nitrogen fertilizer sources and pesticides; and specialization in livestock production.

Interest in diversifying crop production systems has increased recently due to many factors. Commodity prices that are low relative to the costs of fertilizer, machinery, labor, and pesticide inputs, have led producers to examine means of reducing these costs. In addition, natural selection pressure resulting from longer histories of tight rotations and monocultures have led to species shifts, resistance, and/or changes in pest's traditional habits that have resulted in yield losses and/or use of higher priced technologies. Present farm legislation allows use of more diversity without loss of government payments.

Proper application of rotational planning can increase yields and reduce costs. Maintaining and improving soil health and fertility positively affects whole farm economics by reducing weed, disease, and insect pressure and resistance; spreading workloads to reduce fixed machinery and labor costs; providing more optimum planting and harvesting timing; and diversifying income and spreading weather risks.

Photo:

Winter wheat growing in flax stubble harvested with a stripper header.
Two-year-old corn stalks are visible. [Please Click here to continue](#)