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Cover Cropping, Soil Health Workshop slated for March 6 in Lubbock AgriLife experts to weigh possible pros and cons

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LUBBOCK – Cover cropping, the practice of planting a crop to prevent soil erosion and add organic matter, will be the focus of a workshop conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. March 6 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Lubbock.

The center is located at 1102 East Farm-to-Market Road 1294 (exit 11 on I-27 north of Lubbock International Airport).

Individual registration is \$30. RSVP to the AgriLife Extension office in Lubbock at 806-775-1740 is requested by March 4.

“Testimonials abound concerning the potential benefits to cover crop use,” said Mark Brown, AgriLife Extension agent in Lubbock County. “But with our limited water resources, will the practice work on the South Plains? With that in mind, the goal of this program is to bring forth information to start the validation process necessary to determine whether the benefits outweigh the costs of cover cropping under our growing conditions.”

Dr. Calvin Trostle, AgriLife Extension agronomist at Lubbock said regional producers realize cover crops would use significant amounts of water, so he said it is natural to determine if the practice is even permissible under current water use guidelines.

“It’s a practice used mostly where there is much more rainfall than we have here,” Trostle said. “Will it work here? Would the water needed to grow cover crops be detrimental to our cropping system? What are the potential long-term benefits for soil improvement? And do tillage options affect cover cropping? These questions and more are the focus of this workshop where we will attempt to take a pragmatic look at the pros and cons of cover cropping, and at a minimum, identify components of cover cropping that could enhance South Plains crop production.”

Brown said speakers will include staff from AgriLife, Texas Tech University, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service and several area producers who have initiated cover cropping on part of their land.

Producers can access educational materials at <http://lubbock.tamu.edu/cover-crops>.

“The exchange of ideas among attendees, coupled with research and demonstration work conducted by AgriLife will help us identify aspects of cover cropping that may be beneficial to the region,” Trostle said.

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