



# Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association Soil Health Pilot Project

## ● WHY IS SOIL HEALTH IMPORTANT IN OHIO?

Ohio faces significant challenges to water quality and good soil health practices can not only help mitigate this problem, it can also help farmers and ranchers with long-term profitability and resilience. Farmers are already having to adapt to more frequent extreme weather events and are interested in employing best soil health management practices that will create soils that hold more water during droughts and allow for greater infiltration during heavy rain events. Additionally, the cost and availability of fertilizers is becoming an increasing problem for the viability of farms across the country. Building soil health takes time and making those investments will reduce the need for outside fertility and water quality mitigation in the future.



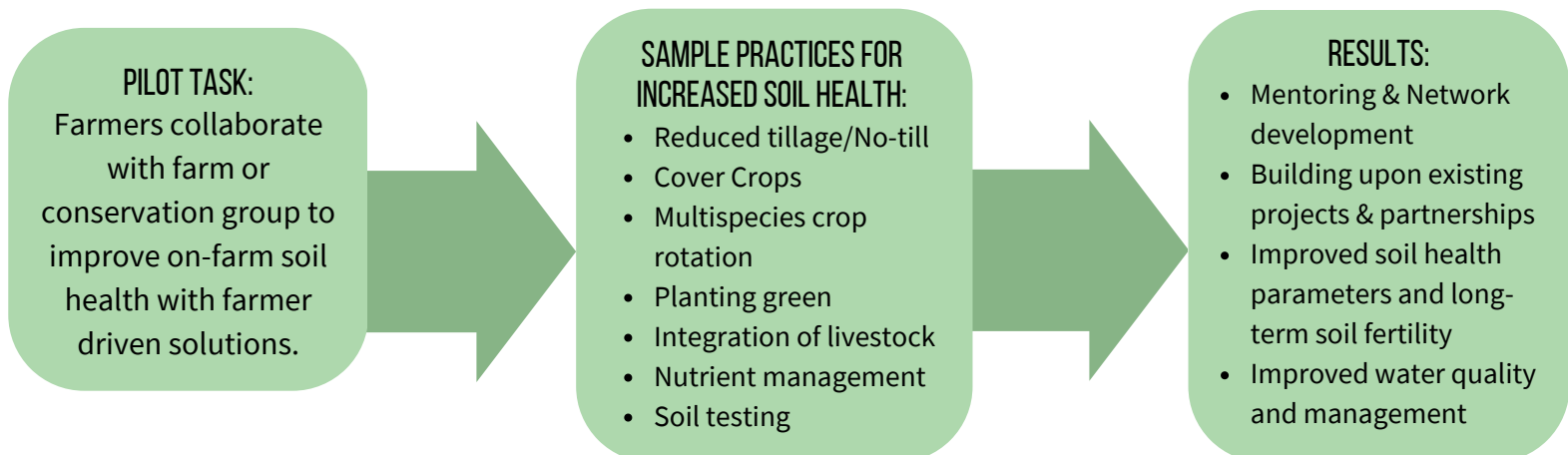
OEFFA Member Scott Myers utilizes good soil health practices like diverse crop rotation, reduced tillage, and cover cropping on his farm, Woodlyn Acres (Wayne Co.).

## ● WHAT DOES THE SOIL HEALTH PILOT PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) conducted listening sessions across the state to learn of farmers' current and desired soil health practices and the barriers to adopting these practices. Farmers and ranchers share a desire to learn about soil health practices from their peers, receive technical and financial assistance and participate in and learn from on-farm demonstrations. The most common barriers were lack of equipment or knowledge, cost, lack of mentors and risk to their cash crop. The Soil Health Pilot Project would fund state-wide farmer led demonstrations, on-farm research, publications, and more focused on improving soil health.

## ● WHAT DO OHIO FARMERS NEED TO PRACTICE BETTER SOIL HEALTH?

The Soil Health Pilot will support small groups of farmers and ranchers who want to increase farm productivity, profitability, resiliency, and positive impact on their community by increasing the health of their soil.



## ● SOIL HEALTH RESULTS IN OHIO

American Farmland Trust conducted two soil health case studies in Ohio which illustrate how wider adoption and support for good soil health practices will yield tremendous benefits for individual producers as well as the state of Ohio.

**Homewood Farms (Delaware Co.)** — Net income increased by \$56 per acre per year or by \$102,366 annually on the 1,830-acre study area, achieving a 142% return on investment by using strip tillage and planting cover crops.

**MadMax Farms (Delaware & Marion Cos.)** — Per acre yields went from 165 to 195 bushels for corn and from 45 to 65 bushels for soybeans with at least half of the improvements resulting from soil health management system. Overall, the farm's bottom line improved by \$38 per acre and by \$47,569 on the more than 1200 acres in the study area.

## ● REQUEST

Include an additional \$250,000 per fiscal year in the FY24-25 State Operating Budget through the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Soil and Water Conservation District Support (700509) for OEFFA to launch the Soil Health Pilot Project.