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**Arkansas cotton farmers, extension specialists examine profitability of soil health**

By Tracy Courage U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast Facts:**

* Ag experts, cotton producers to discuss soil health profitability
* Roundtable Feb. 16 at 1 p.m. (CST)
* Registerat <https://bit.ly/3piUjwY>

(462 words)

LITTLE ROCK — Improving soil health is in the best interest of Arkansas cotton farmers, but producers use different strategies for doing so.

Bill Robertson, extension cotton agronomist, and Matt Fryer, extension soil instructor, both with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, will moderate an online roundtable discussion with three Arkansas cotton producers about their experiences and methods for managing soil health in their farms.

The discussion, “Soil Health in Arkansas: Is it Profitable?”, begins at 1 p.m. (CST) on Feb. 16. It is free and open to the public. Registration is available at <https://bit.ly/3piUjwY>.

The speakers include:

• Adam Chappell of Cotton Plant, Arkansas, who grows cotton, corn, soybeans and rice and has used no-till and cover crops on his 9,000-acre farm for more than a decade. Besides increases in soil organic matter, Chappell says cover crops help reduce pest pressures by providing diverse habitat for beneficial insects.

• Wes Kirkpatrick of Dumas, Arkansas, who uses no-till and cereal grains as his primary cover crop as part of his soil health management system. He has seen improved water infiltration and reduced weed pressure.

• Jesse Flye of Trumann, Arkansas, who is working to expand his cover crop acreage to achieve the benefits that other producers have recorded.

“We all hope that having guidance from producers like our three panelists will help smooth out the learning curve for those wanting to get started toward improving their soil health,” Robertson said. “Being profitable can be complex and sometimes difficult in today’s economic environment. It takes a holistic approach to help ensure success. Practices that help improve soil health should be a part of that plan.”

All three of the featured cotton producers use cover crops, which extension experts recommend.

“Cover crops should be used as a tool to help solve on-farm issues,” Fryer said. “They can help with herbicide-resistant weed issues, lack of water infiltration and bed integrity.”

The roundtable is part of the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Cotton Farmer Showcase, a series of eight online discussions with U.S. cotton farmers and soil health experts throughout the South. The discussions will be live-streamed at 1 p.m. (CST) each Tuesday through March 23. Registration is free but required to participate.

The roundtable is part of the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Cotton project, which provides farmer-focused education and training events delivered by Soil Health Institute scientists, partnering with local soil health technical specialists and farmer mentors who have implemented successful soil health management systems.

The goal is to increase the adoption of soil health management systems among cotton producers while documenting environmental and economic benefits.

For more information about the project, visit <https://soilhealthinstitute.org/soil-health-training/>.

To learn more about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [www.uaex.edu](http://www.uaex.edu). Follow us on Twitter at [@UAEX\_edu](http://www.twitter.com/uaex_edu).

**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

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