

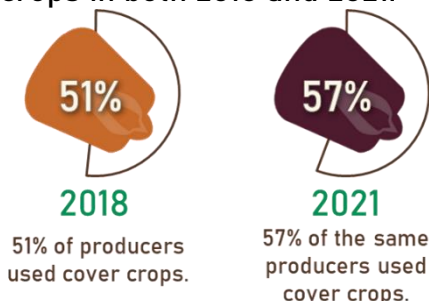
# South Dakota Farmers' Usage of Cover Crops

Researchers at South Dakota State University (SDSU) conducted producer surveys in the eastern part of South Dakota in both 2018 and 2021. Producers could take the survey online or via mail and were asked questions about their farm, farming practices including usage of soil and water conservation practices, and their values.

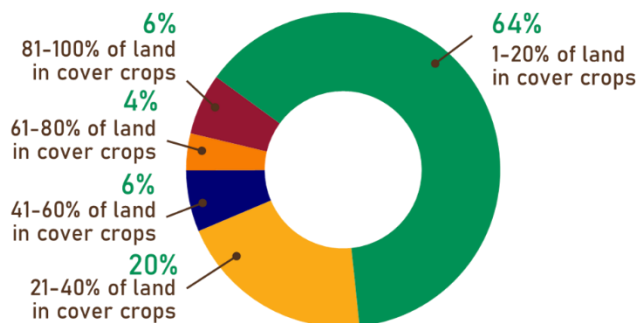
Using publicly available addresses from the Farm Service Agency, a random sample of 3,000 producers were sent the survey in 2018. 650 were ineligible, and 708 responded to the survey for a response rate of 30%. In 2021, the same producers who took the survey in 2018 were asked to take a follow up survey. 94 were ineligible, and 350 responded for a 59% response rate.

This factsheet shows results based on the responses of the same participants who answered conservation practice questions in both surveys. Our focus here is only on the cover crop questions.

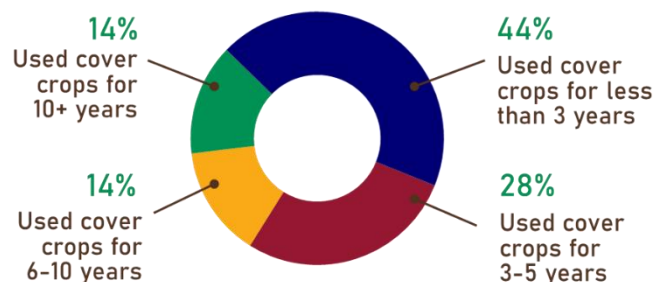
Just over *half* of South Dakota farmers used cover crops in both 2018 and 2021.



In 2021, most (63%) cover crop users planted them on 1-20% of their farmland.



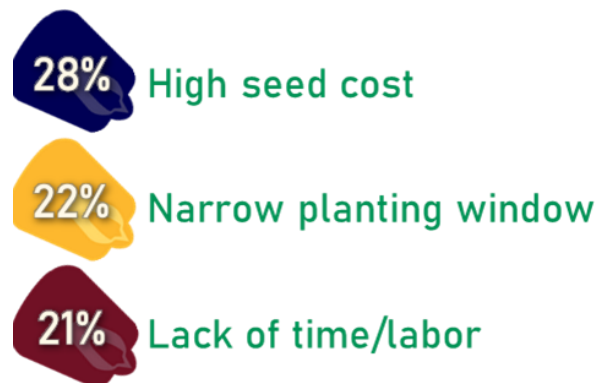
The highest percentage of cover crop users in 2021 had been planting them for less than 3 years.



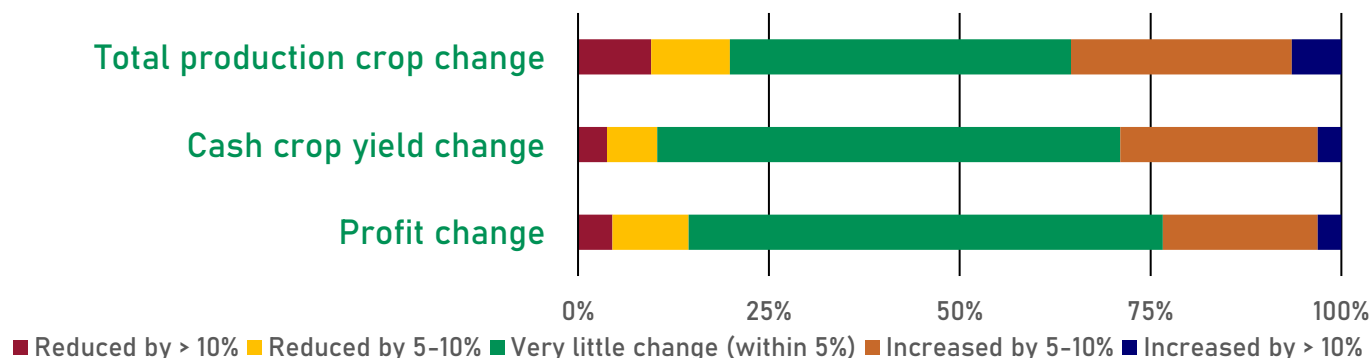
The top three *benefits* that South Dakota farmers associated with cover crops in 2018 (those who strongly agreed) were:



The top three *challenges* that South Dakota farmers had with cover crops in 2018 (those who said very important) were:



In 2021, producers were asked about *changes* to their total production costs, cash crop yields, and profitability of cover crops. While the majority saw very little change for each (e.g., within 5%; see green in figure below), for most who did see a change, it was an increase by 5-10% (see orange in figure below) for each indicator.



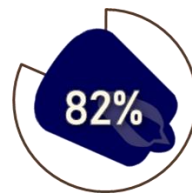
Most farmers who use cover crops, are *not* getting cost share to adopt them.



### NO COST SHARE

64% of producers using cover crops did not receive cost share to adopt them.

Cover crop use in South Dakota will likely continue to increase. The majority of those surveyed said they *plan to use* or are *likely to continue using cover crops*.



### FUTURE USAGE

Most producers surveyed in both 2018 and 2021 either plan to use or will likely continue to use cover crops.

Many South Dakota farmers are planning to use cover crops to *protect* their conventional fields most affected by droughts and/or floods.



### NATURAL DISASTER PROTECTION

In 2021, many (41%) producers indicated they were likely to use cover crops to protect fields affected by droughts and/or floods.

For more information about this survey research conducted with South Dakota farmers, please visit SDSU Open Prairie (<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/sdfarmsurvey>). You may also email Dr. Tong Wang ([tong.wang@sdstate.edu](mailto:tong.wang@sdstate.edu)), Associate Professor and Advanced Production Specialist at SDSU or Jim Ristau ([jimr@sdcorn.org](mailto:jimr@sdcorn.org)), Director of Sustainability at SD Corn.

