

# Policy Pathways to Protect Kansas Soil Health



## New Survey of Kansas Farmers Shows Soil Health Management Plays Key Role for Resiliency

### Healthy soil benefits not only farmers, but the broader environment.

For farmers, improvements to soil health increase productivity and profitability and reduce inputs on farms. More broadly, healthier soils help combat the effects of climate change by storing more carbon, which reduces carbon dioxide levels, and increases soil resiliency to climate events like drought and flooding.

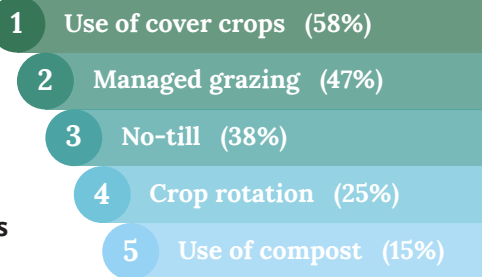
The Kansas Rural Center (KRC), a statewide nonprofit dedicated to sustainable agriculture and rural living, conducted a survey to understand the landscape of soil health practices in Kansas. KRC gathered the opinions of farmers and ranchers about possible government incentive programs related to soil health practices.

106 of the 144 stakeholders who responded to the survey primarily identified as a farmer or rancher. Others were predominately landowners (10%), farm managers (7%), or agricultural professionals (5%). Survey respondents hailed from all four quadrants of the state. Over 90% of respondents already employ practices to improve soil health on their farms.

## Survey Results

Kansas farmers and ranchers use numerous practices to protect the health of their soil by preventing erosion, maintaining nutrients, and increasing organic matter.

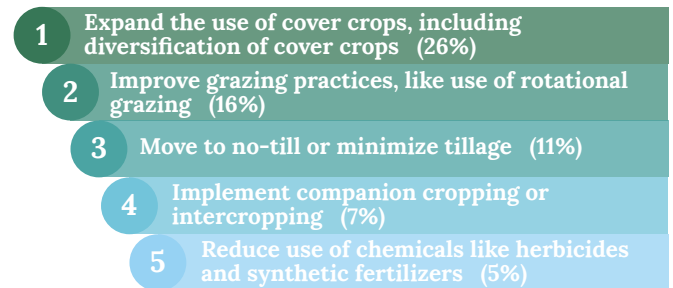
Top Five Practices Currently Employed by Survey Respondents



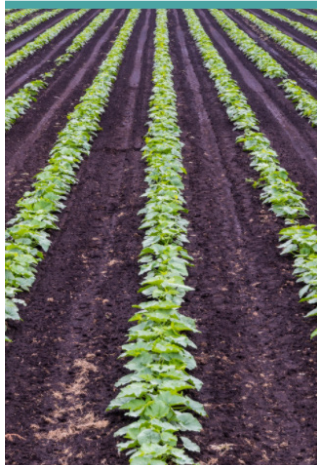
**Ninety-four percent** of those surveyed are interested in implementing more soil health practices on their land in the future.

This demonstrates a significant commitment to expanding soil health practices in the future among Kansas farmers and ranchers.

### Top Five Practices Farmers and Ranchers Hope to Implement in the Future



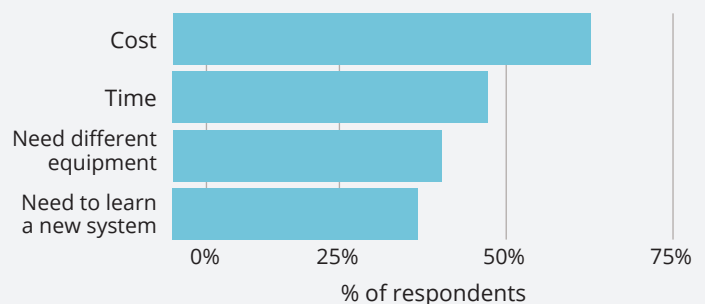
Other desired practices include growing more perennials, using compost, increased soil testing, and diversifying or adding more livestock.



## Obstacles to New Soil Health Practices

Despite the widespread interest in implementing more soil health practices, farmers and ranchers face a variety of obstacles that slow the pace at which new soil health practices can be implemented or impede them all together.

### What are the main obstacles stopping you from adding more soil health practices on your farm?



## Building Support for Soil Health Legislation

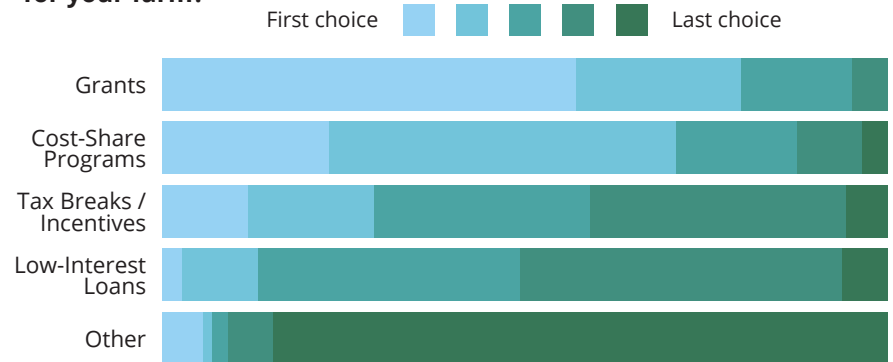
Kansas farmers and ranchers have a significant interest in improving the health of the soils on their land but face barriers to receiving the financial and technical support they need. This, paired with a growing climate crisis, makes new legislation to aid and incentivize soil health practices well-timed and much needed.

Legislation such as **H.B. 2310** (2021) helps fill the void for soil health policy in Kansas. H.B. 2310 promotes the implementation of soil health practices in the state by creating the Kansas healthy soils fund and the Kansas healthy soil initiative.

## Financial Barriers

Survey respondents named “cost” as the largest obstacle to adding more soil health practices. New policies that directly address this obstacle are poised to be effective. Survey respondents ranked grants and cost-share programs as their top two preferred means of government support and financial assistance.

### Which is the most helpful type of government support or incentive for your farm?



## Barriers to Implementation of Practices

Kansas farmers and ranchers are well-positioned to implement new soil health practices, including many of those described in H.B. 2310 (2021). For example, many practices described as “healthy soil practices” in the bill like keeping soil covered, maximizing biodiversity, integrating animals into land management, and minimizing tillage, were listed by survey respondents as current or future soil health practices.

Although many farmers are becoming more educated about soil health tools available, nearly all survey respondents were unfamiliar with the USDA COMET-Planner and COMET-Farm tools that help farmers estimate the carbon changes greenhouse gas impacts of their soil health practices. Any policy enacted should be accompanied by proper training through educational providers like USDA NRCS and K-State Extension.

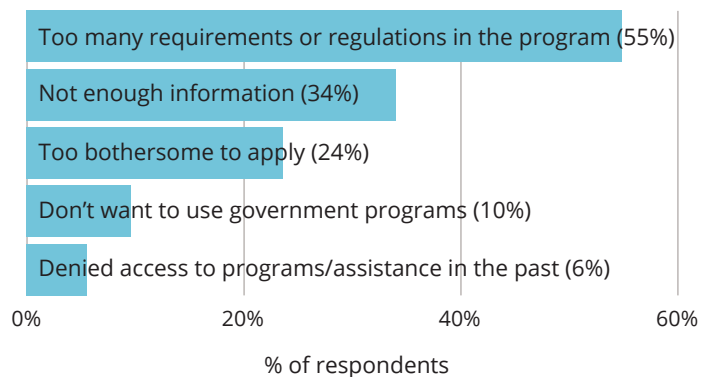
## Barriers to Participation

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents have participated in some type of government farm program in the past and would likely embrace a new opportunity to secure financial and educational resources. However, past participation in government programs has come with its own set of obstacles that legislators should weigh when shaping legislation.

The Kansas Rural Center supports the adoption of policy that incentivizes farmers to adopt new soil health practices. KRC also encourages sponsors of soil health legislation to engage with farmers to refine their policies.

Together, farmers and the legislature can work to continue building a productive and environmentally-sound agricultural system in Kansas.

### What has prevented or hindered you from utilizing government farm programs?



For more information or to see the full survey results, contact the Kansas Rural Center.

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