



ONTARIO COVER CROP STRATEGY

# Covered Land Clean Water

## Update for the Ag Sector Working Group Meeting

Friday June 16, 2017

Presented by Ken Currah

(representative of the Cover Crops Steering Committee)



# The Partnership

Partnership formed to support early actions under Lake Erie's DAP early actions.  
Agreement made by "Cover Crops Steering Committee" to develop & implement a long-term  
Ontario Cover Crops Strategy



# The “Ontario Cover Crops Strategy”



## Key Deliverables

1. Gather, assess and synthesize current knowledge related to cover crop programs and producer behaviour;
2. Convene & facilitate discussions with the Cover Crops Steering Committee to identify strategic outreach, education and communication approaches, and develop a Cover Crops Outreach and Education Strategy;
3. Support the Cover Crops Steering Committee in identifying strategic outcomes for the strategy and consensus on leadership approach to actions.

## Ontario Cover Crops Strategy

April 2017

What  
we can  
do



## Ontario Cover Crops Strategy

Background Report for the  
Ontario Cover Crops Steering Committee

May 2017

How we  
plan to  
act





# The Strategy

Primary outcome from Lit Review :

## Four Focus Areas

1. Targeting research to farmer needs
2. Influencing public policy and programs targeting cover crops
3. Improving the messaging and outreach related to cover crops; and
4. Encouraging and supporting champions



## Focus Area Components

1. Identify barriers
2. Identify enablers (tools to address barriers)
3. Suggest strategies (immediate & long-term)

# Strategies for Research

## **Enablers:**

- Research targeted to local conditions
- Enhance knowledge transfer
- Economic analysis / cost benefit studies
- On-farm data linking cover crops to productivity

## **Action:**

- Prioritize applied research needs that address common challenges farmers face with cover crop adoption
- Develop a baseline measurement tool to gather data
- Advocate for cover crops research funding that supports partnerships (i.e. researchers and farmers)



# Strategies for Programs and Policy

## **Enablers:**

- Improved incentive & risk management programs:
  - address program length, timing of program parameters, deadlines, accounting rules, paperwork burden

## **Action:**

- Inform policy makers and program staff about on-farm challenges
- Work with government and other funders to ensure the administration of programs encourages adoption
- Recommend that funding programs support farmers who already plant cover crops
- Link funding programs to on-farm data collection from program participants (to enhance baseline info)



# Strategies for Sharing the Message

## Enablers

- Provide micro-scale learning opportunities
- Easily accessible resource & research library
- Decision tools for optimal management of cover crops
- Crop input retailers and CCAs to provide valuable direct support
- Common messages on the benefits and how to address management concerns
- Informed landlords to encourage adoption on leased/rented land

## Actions

- Develop a communications strategy with consistent messaging that involves all steering committee organizations in outreach
  - Engage farm media to share the message and use photos with cover crops
- Create a web portal independent of any one organization as a one-stop place for good, reliable information on cover crops in Ontario
  - Includes info on funding programs, tools, research, photo library, speakers; Q&As
- Create a plan for outreach activities
  - Promote more cover crop workshops for CCA credits; circulate common information resources (factsheets).



# Strategies for Champions

## **Enablers:**

- Farmers learn from the experience & knowledge of peers
- Peer-to-peer interactions catalyze change in the region
- Financial support allows champions to share their stories to a broader audience
- Access to downloadable presentations & event templates

## **Actions:**

- Source funding support for champions & cover crop network
- Support funding for the Ontario Soil Network Initiative
- Have resources for champions on the web portal





# Next Steps for the Steering Committee

- Seeking commitment from boards to support the actions and responsibilities outlined in the strategy
- Setting a vision and target for implementation (i.e. cover crop acreage)
- Assigning governance for implementation
- Communicate opportunities for industry-government investment
- Launch a communications package showcasing the Ontario Cover Crops Strategy



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**Covered Land**  
**Clean Water**