



## 2013 Evaluation Report

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### INTRODUCTION

Iowa Learning Farms continues to build a Culture of Conservation by utilizing sound research from Iowa State University and ILF partner agencies, in-field application and demonstration, and outreach and education to Iowans of all ages and residencies.

Iowa Learning Farms is growing more effective! Our overall number of field days and attendees increased in 2013. In comparison to 2012, we found that **15% more** farmers attending our field days in 2013 are increasing their surface residue, **11% more** fall-seeded a cover crop, **21% more** are discussing no-till or strip-till with their landowners, and **15% more** are discussing cover crops with their landowners.

**Field Days do matter!** The more field days a farmer attended over the last three years, the more likely he/she will implement a conservation practice for multiple years. There was a **2% increase** from 2012 to 2013 in those who networked conservation ideas with other farmers. More importantly, **76%** of those who networked influenced one or more additional farmers. It is that multiplier effect of influence gained from ILF field days that is the most important tool in building a Culture of Conservation. While ILF spoke to 1,135 farmers, those farmers then influenced an additional **777 people**. That means we reached **68% more** farmers than those who attended our field days. Field days are not just a place to learn how to do the practice, but a place to find support needed to continue using the practice, and a place to learn messages that influence others. Field days are vital for creating and growing the lasting farmer-to-farmer networks.

Iowa Learning Farms is making a difference. Since 2008, 86% of farmers attending ILF field days have made a change in their behavior:

- **Average of 37% of farmers increased surface residue management on 83,757 new acres of strip-till or no-till**
- **405 = average number of increased acres put into no-till/strip-till**
- **Average of 44% of farmers increased surface residue management on 60,513 new acres of cover crops since 2010**
- **Of the 200,000 cover crop acres planted in Iowa last year, 21% of those acres were by farmers attending a ILF/PFI field day or workshop**
- **Since 2007, “farmers taking no action” after an ILF event has dropped from 18% to 8%. In 2013, 92% of farmers attending an ILF event took action toward increasing conservation practices on their farm.**
- **We are reaching younger than average farmers. On average, our farmers are 13 years younger than those surveyed in the Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll.**

### OVERVIEW OF ILF IN 2013

From January to December 2013, the Iowa Learning Farms program:

- **Sponsored 32 farmer events (field days/workshops) attended by 2,058 people**
- **Participated at 114 other outreach events, attended by 10,701 people**

## ILF APPROACH TO EVALUATION

Evaluation of Iowa Learning Farms outreach events occur in five stages:

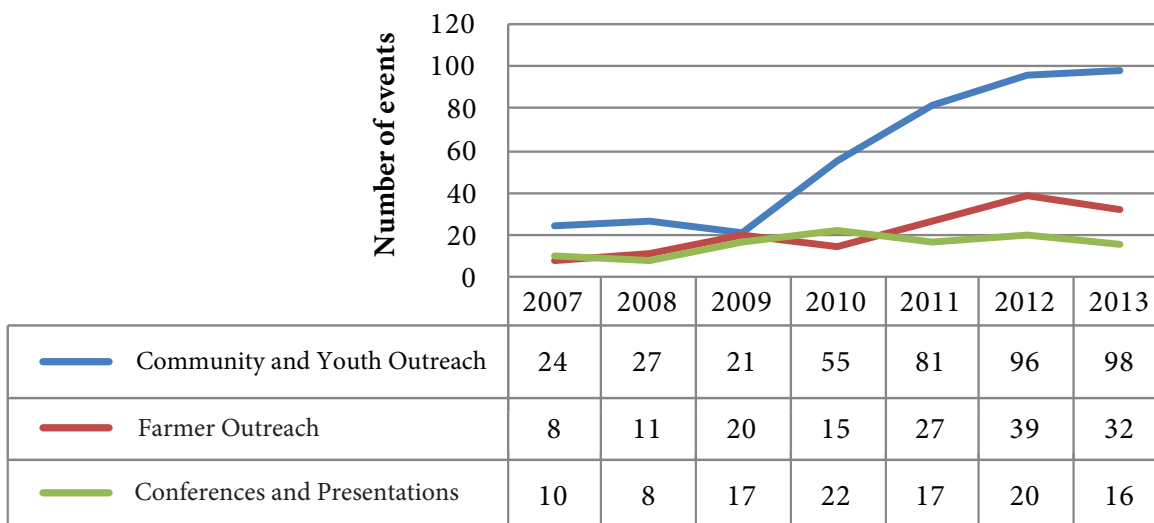
- **Event Evaluations** for any event that ILF team members participate. These forms, completed by ILF team members, help us to understand the audience's level of engagement and help us to improve future outreach activities.
- **Comment Cards** filled out by all participants at an ILF-sponsored event in order to gain a better understanding of who they are and why they are there.
- **Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires** to participants in any ILF-sponsored "field" event. These questionnaires were sent within three weeks of the event. The questions focus on the clarity and accessibility of the information received and inquired whether participants planned to make any changes in their land management as a result of the event. *The individual field day evaluations are in a separate report.*
- **Follow-up Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires** to participants in any ILF-sponsored "field" event. These surveys were sent in January 2014 to see if the participants had made the changes they said they were going to make in earlier evaluations.
- **Teacher Evaluations** of ILF school events (in partnership with Water Rocks! program). These questionnaires were handed to the teachers at each outreach event with a return envelope to help see how these individuals perceived our educational programming. *These evaluations are in a separate report.*

# EVENT EVALUATIONS

Iowa Learning Farms staff complete event evaluation forms for all major presentations including field days. For detailed information of a specific event, see the quarterly and year-end reports.

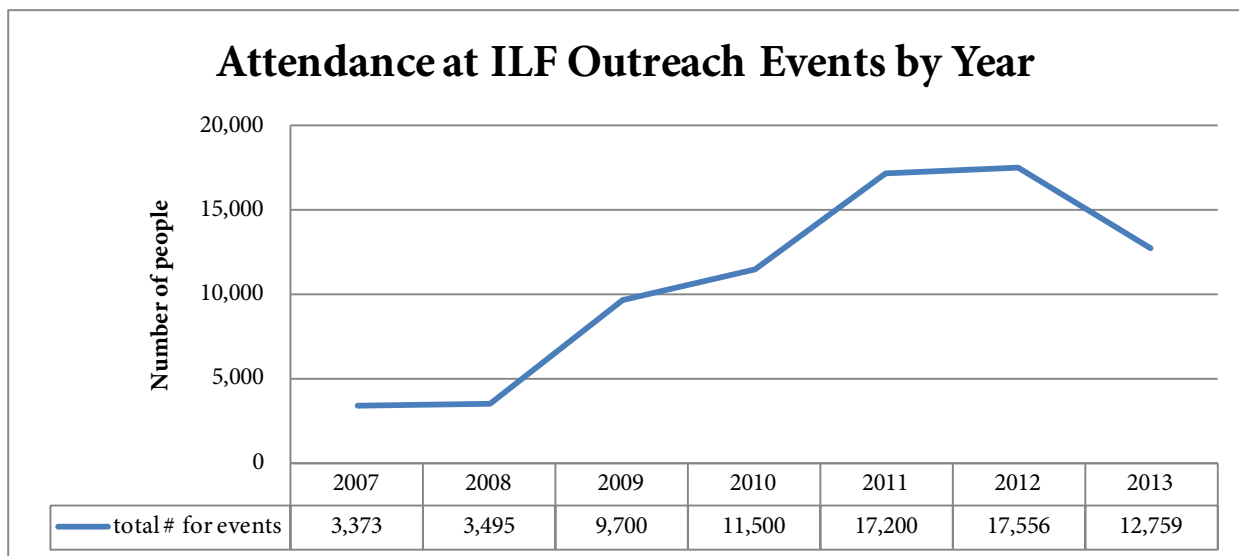
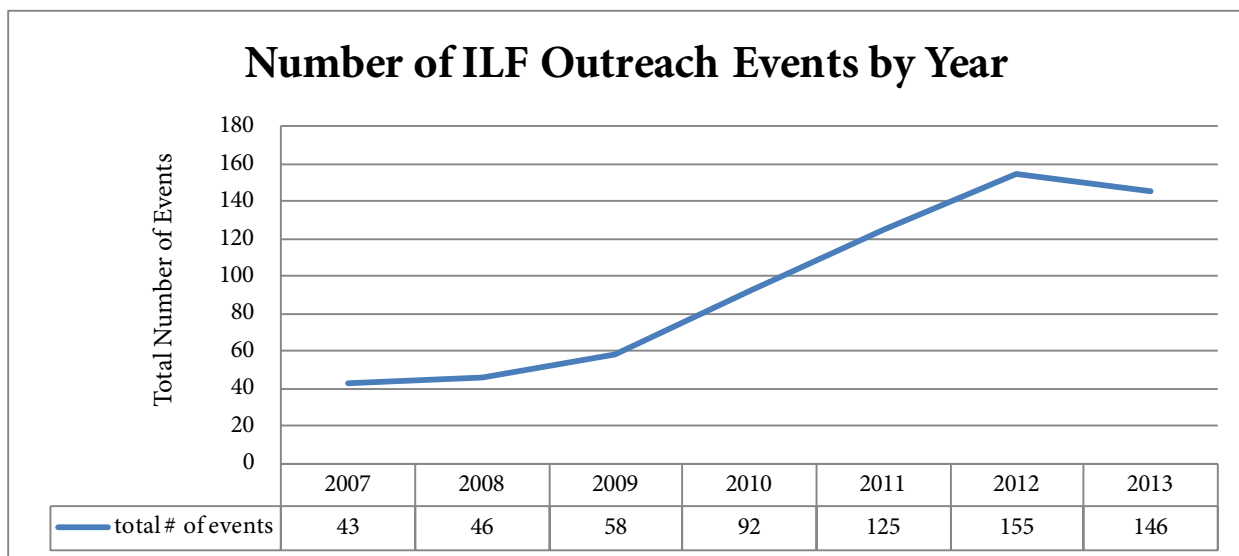
Month	# of events						
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
January	3	7	5	1	5		
February	1	4	4	3	8		
March	8	8	8	14	5		
April	15	15	15	3	2	2	1
May	14	21	15	6	3	6	2
June	24	21	19	14	8	7	8
July	27	34	20	22	9	17	14
August	13	19	8	12	6	4	9
September	9	9	21	11	5	8	8
October	12	14	10	6	3	3	1
November	17	2			1		
December	3	1			3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>42</b>

## ILF Outreach Events by Type and Year



Our outreach numbers have greatly increased over the last seven years but not at the expense of farmer outreach.

Description of Audiences at ILF Outreach Events							
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
<b>Age groups</b>							
<i>Primarily youth</i>	28%	25%	27%	24%	10%	26%	14%
<i>All ages</i>	31%	34%	27%	27%	21%	35%	42%
<i>Primarily adults</i>	41%	41%	46%	49%	69%	44%	44%
<b>Background</b>							
<i>Rural</i>	41%	42%	52%	52%	47%	54%	56%
<i>Urban</i>	29%	21%	9%	14%	2%	11%	7%
<i>Rural/urban</i>	30%	37%	39%	34%	52%	35%	37%
<b>Level of engagement</b>							
<i>High</i>	85%	91%	78%	78%	81%	83%	77%
<i>Average</i>	14%	8%	18%	15%	14%	13%	18%
<i>Low</i>	1%	1%	1%	7%	5%	4%	5%



Attendance at field days was up in 2013. However, the overall number of attendees at ILF events was lower. We did more smaller venue events like library visits. We also changed the way we counted the Ankeny Children's Water Festival.

## 2013 Field Day/Workshop Audience Participation in Evaluation

	# Attendees	# Comment Cards	# Returned Evaluations	# Returned Follow-up Evaluations
Northwest Iowa No-Till Conference (Moville)	167	91	56	46
Benton Co. Cover Crop Management Workshop (Luzerne)	90	82	52	34
Eastern Iowa Hay Producers Assoc. Cover Crop Management Workshop (Welton)	90	48	18	16
Black Hawk Lake Watershed Workshop (Breda)	85	43	18	11
Carroll Co. Cover Crop Management Workshop (Dedham)	70	36	23	14
Montgomery Co. Cover Crop Management Workshop (Lewis)	80	56	23	20
Dordt College Cover Crop Field Day (Sioux Center)	83	52	20	21
Cover Crop Workshop, Ames (ISUEO field specialists)	60	NA	NA	NA
Clayton Co. Cover Crop Field Day (Elkader)	86	59	38	28
Clayton Co. Cover Crop Pasture Walk (McGregor)	65	30	11	9
Hewitt Creek Watershed Cover Crop Field Day (New Vienna)	32	23	11	12
Smeltzer Trust Farm Field Day (Otho)	70	32	19	15
Triple C Farms Pasture Tour (Leon)	39	24	11	NA
Buena Vista Co. Cover Crop Field Day (Albert City)	71	48	15	10
Southwest Iowa Cover Crop Planning Session (Shenandoah)	95	80	NA	NA
Arlyn Kauffman Cover Crop Field Day (Weldon)	50	20	10	9
Laura Krouse Field Day @ Abbe Hills Farms (Mt. Vernon)	90	16	7	3
Davis Co. Cover Crop Field Day (Bloomfield)	52	42	17	13
PFI Cover Crop Meeting (Monona)	12	8	3	2
PFI Cover Crop Meeting (Independence)	56	42	23	16
Follow up to Cover Crop Field Day (FEEL— ISUEO field specialists)	20	NA	NA	NA
Nutrient Management Field Day (Woolstock)	85	36	21	16
AEA Cover Crop Field Day (Boone)	120	68	23	19

Mark Jacobs Cover Crop Field Day (Hedrick)	33	20	7	4
CREP Wetland Tour with DMACC (Granger)	36	NA	NA	NA
Des Moines Co./Lake Geode Cover Crop Field Day (West Burlington)	63	36*	NA	18
Storm Lake Cover Crop Field Day (Storm Lake)	34	*22	NA	11
Amana Cover Crop Field Day (Amana)	59	*42	NA	18
Rick Juchems Cover Crop Field Day (Plainfield)	68	*31	NA	16
Elsbernd Cover Crop Field Day (Postville)	18	*9	NA	4
Mark Peterson Cover Crop Field Day (Stanton)	18	*11	NA	8
Fred Abels Cover Crop Field Day (Holland)	40	*28	NA	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>+2,058</b>	<b>**1,135</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>++408</b>

\*Due to these field days occurring in November, the participants will only receive the follow-up mailing.

\*\* Represents the number of people who were mailed an evaluation. Not all of those who filled out a comment card received an evaluation because they worked for ISUEO or a state or federal agency. The total number of comment cards was actually 1,243.

+ Represents the total number of people at field days but not every field day was evaluated. The last seven field days were so late in the year, we only evaluated them once using the January survey. There was a CREP wetland tour with DMACC students that we didn't evaluate and two training workshops with ISUEO field specialists at FEEL that didn't warrant evaluation.

++ This is a 40% response rate. This is a good response to a single mailed survey.

## Summary of Comment Cards (filled out by attendees at the field day)

n=1,243

<i>Which statement best describes you?</i>	
<b>Farmer/operator</b>	<b>60%</b>
Landowner	31%
Government Employee	14%
Other	20%
Individuals could choose more than one category.	

<i>Age range of attendees</i>	
18-30	17%
31-40	13%
41-50	12%
<b>51-60</b>	<b>30%</b>
61-70	17%
71+	11%

<i>How did you hear about the field day?</i>	
<b>Neighbor/Word of mouth</b>	<b>24%</b>
ISU Extension Staff	16%
District Office	20%
Website	9%
Radio	5%
Newspaper	16%
Mailing	12%
Other	11%
Individuals could choose more than one category.	

## Summary of Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires for Field Days

The information shown below was obtained from the 21 field days/workshops that ILF evaluated between March 15 and September 15. Three field days weren't evaluated at all and seven field days were late in the year and only evaluated using the January evaluation.

These evaluations were mailed to attendees within three weeks following the field day/workshop. The total number of attendees that were mailed an evaluation was 956, with 435 evaluations mailed back. That is a response rate of 46%.

n=435	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Overall quality of field day or workshop	47%	47%	4%	2%	--
Effectiveness of expert presentations	47%	44%	7%	2%	--
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	50%	42%	6%	2%	--
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	46%	46%	7%	1%	--

n=435	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Response averages
Overall quality of field day or workshop	5	4	3	2	1	4.40
Effectiveness of expert presentations	5	4	3	2	1	4.35
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	5	4	3	2	1	4.39
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	5	4	3	2	1	4.37

### % of respondents who thought the field day was Excellent or Good.

	2012	2013	
Overall quality of field day or workshop	91%	94%	+3%
Effectiveness of expert presentations	88%	91%	+3%
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	85%	92%	+7%
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	90%	92%	+2%

## Summary of Follow-Up Evaluation Questionnaires for Field Days

(sent by mail in January 2014 to all those who were sent an initial evaluation)

Please describe at least one way you will integrate what you learned at this meeting into your farming:

	Jan 2014 follow-up n=408	Jan 2013 follow-up n=195	Jan 2012 follow-up n=253	Feb 2011 follow-up n=96	Feb 2010 follow-up n=130
Increased use of surface residue management (no-till or strip-till) on some of my acres (n=89)*	<b>51%</b>	36%	38%	32%	30%
List # of acres	<b>12,414</b>	7,198	32,058	8,983	12,558
Average # of acres per respondent who said they were putting more acres into no-till or strip-till	<b>318</b>	267	458	428	370
I fall seeded cover crops on some of my acres in fall 2013 (n=319)*	<b>64%(42,167 new acres)</b>	53% (12,399 new acres)	32% (4,348 new acres)	47% (1,599 new acres)	23%
Average # of acres per respondent who said they were putting more acres into cover crops	<b>168</b>	197	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I discussed +/- of using no-till or strip-till with my landowners (n=89)*	<b>61%</b>	40%	35%	27%	33%
I discussed +/- of using cover crops with my landowners (n=319)*	<b>65%</b>	50%	21%	Not asked	Not asked
I networked conservation ideas with other farmers or my farmer clients	<b>67%</b>	65%	47%	61%	72%
If yes, how successful were you (n=272)	<b>One other: 36% Two or more: 40% No others: 24%</b>	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I purchased a grain drill or other seeding equipment, joint purchase of seeding equipment with my neighbors, leased equipment from local ag supplier or co-op, or contracted for aerial seeding of cover crops (n=319)*	<b>40%</b>	19%	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I purchased strip-till equipment, made a joint purchase of strip-till equipment with my neighbors, or leased equipment from a local ag supplier (n=89)*	<b>8%</b>	14%	11%	8%	Not asked
I did not make any changes	<b>8%</b>	9%	14%	16%	18%

\*These are the number of possible respondents for each question for 2013 field days.

Those without a number after the question were asked for all the field days.

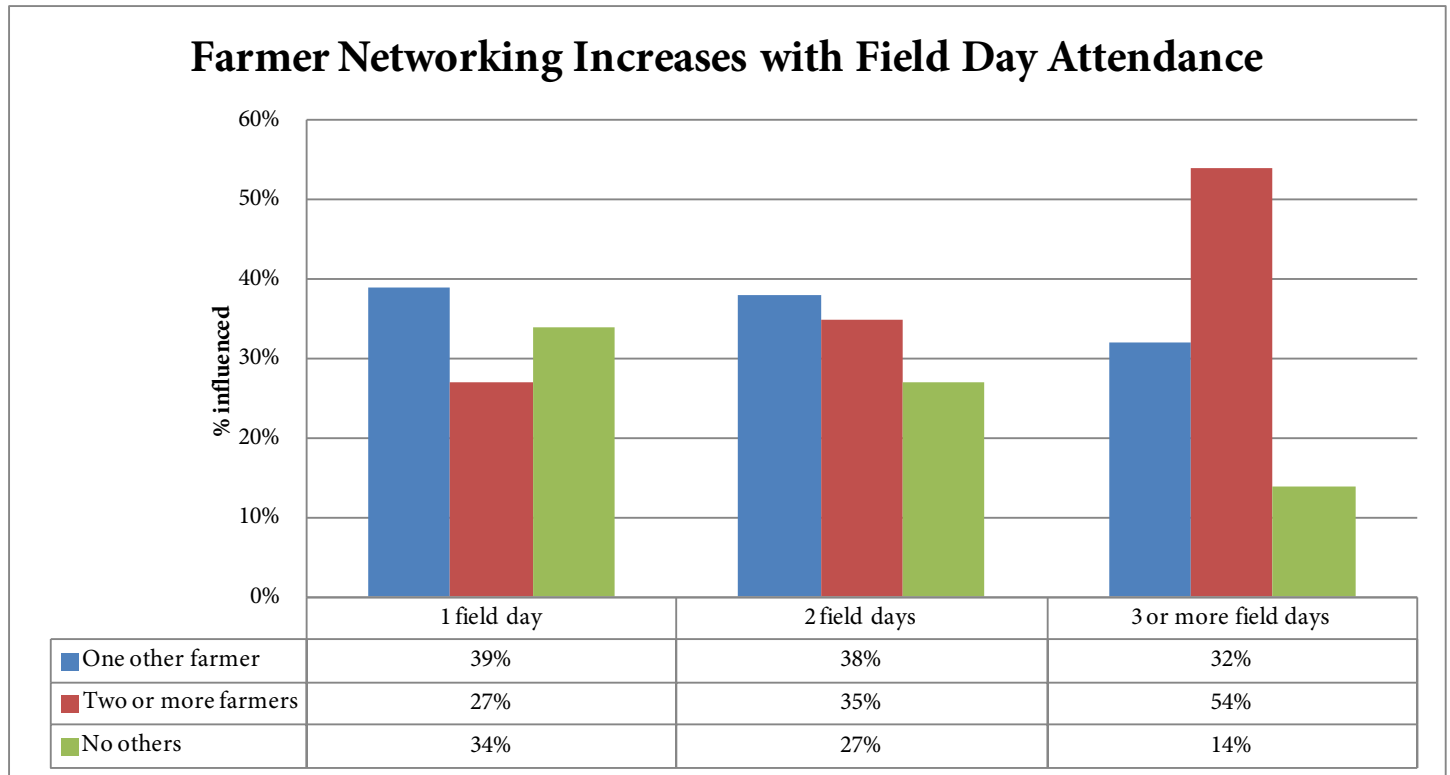


## Summary of Successful Farmer Networking and the Multiplier Effect

The information presented in the chart below shows the relationship between the number of field days the participant had been to over the last three years and how many other farmers they influenced outside of the ILF field days.

The question asked was *I networked conservation ideas with other farmers or my farmer clients. If yes, how successful were you: I influenced one other farmer, two or more farmers, no others.*

Number of field days/workshops attended over last 3 years? n=408	
1	41%
2	26%
3-5	27%
6+	6%



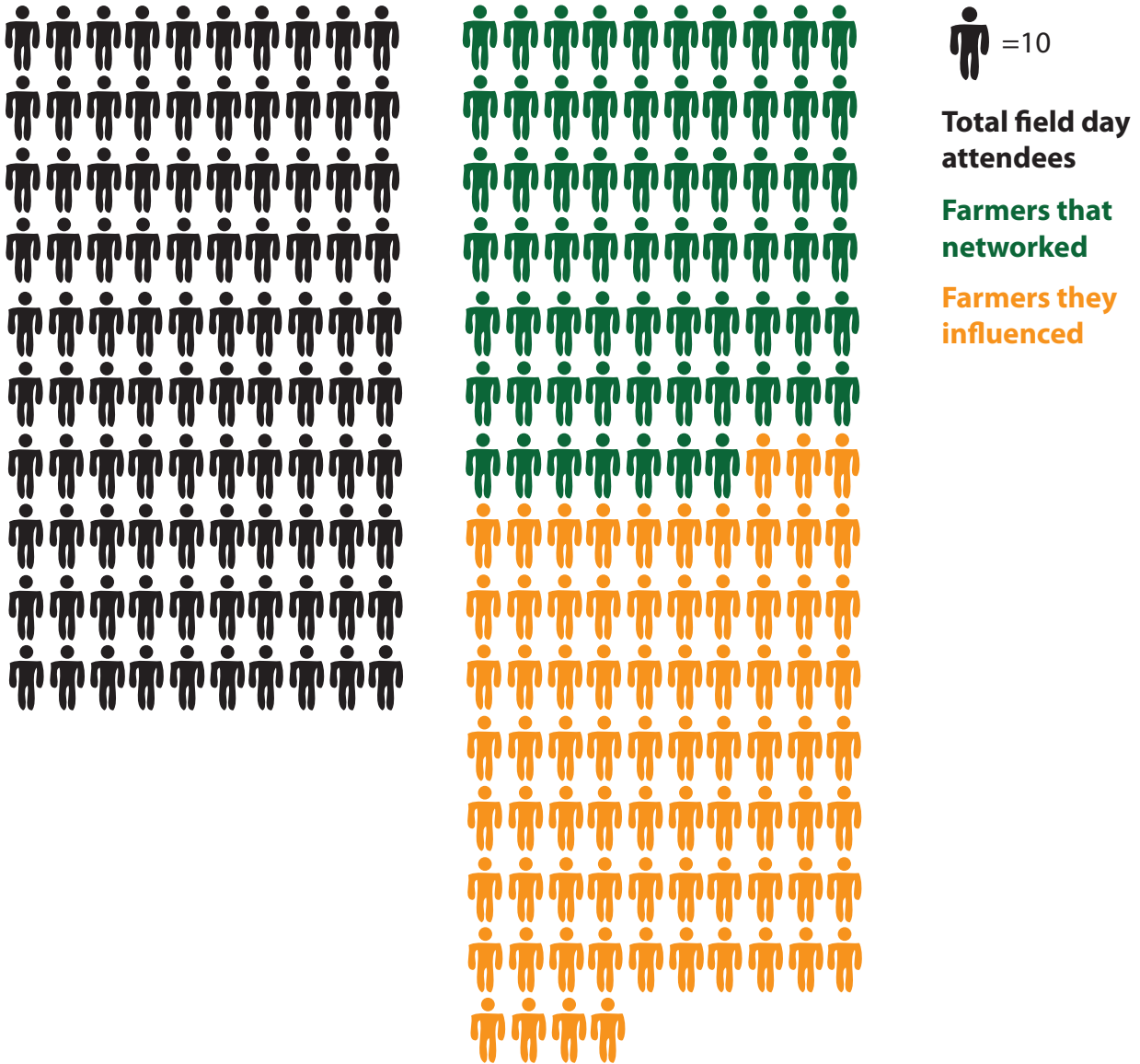
\*Some of those who responded *No others* said they weren't sure if they had influenced others.

**The results show that with each field day one attends, the more likely they are to influence others.**

On average, 66% said they influenced others after being to one field day, 73% said they influenced others after being to two, and 86% said they influenced others after being to three or more field days.

# Multiplier Effect: Extending Our Influence Through Farmer Networking

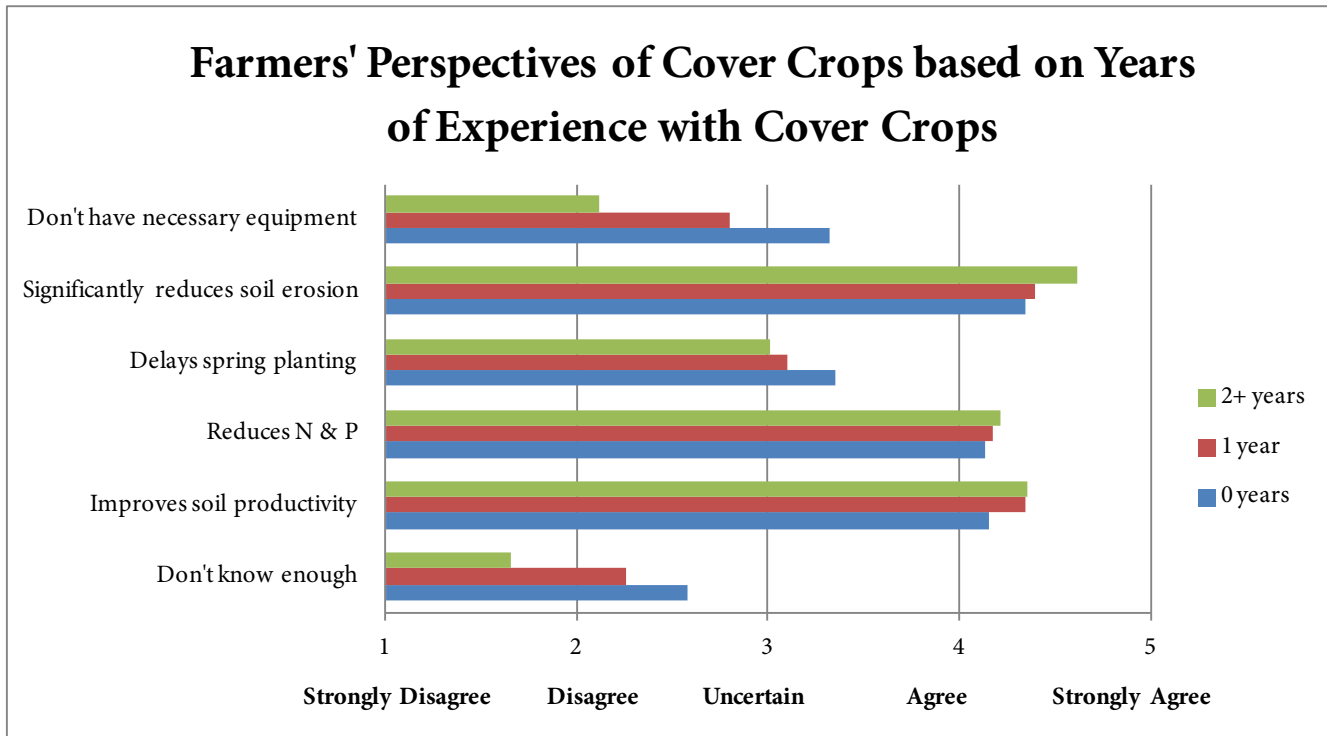
For every 1,000 farmers who attend our field day, 67%, or 670 of those farmers networked with others. Out of the 670 farmers, 36%, or 241 successfully influenced one other farmer about conservation/water quality issues. So that is 241 additional farmers. Out of the 670, 40% report influencing two or more. So the multiplier effect of any given field day is that we reach 68% more farmers than those who attend our field day in person.



## Perspectives on Cover Crops

The final questions were asked on all follow-up questionnaires:

Please check the extent to which you agree or disagree to the following statements



Type of cover crop planted? n=252		
	Single (56%)	+Mix (44%) 45% = 2 species 36% = 3 species 19% = 4+ species
Cereal rye	84%	66%
Wheat	4%	14%
Oats	6%	45%
Radish	3%	71%
Other	3%	43%

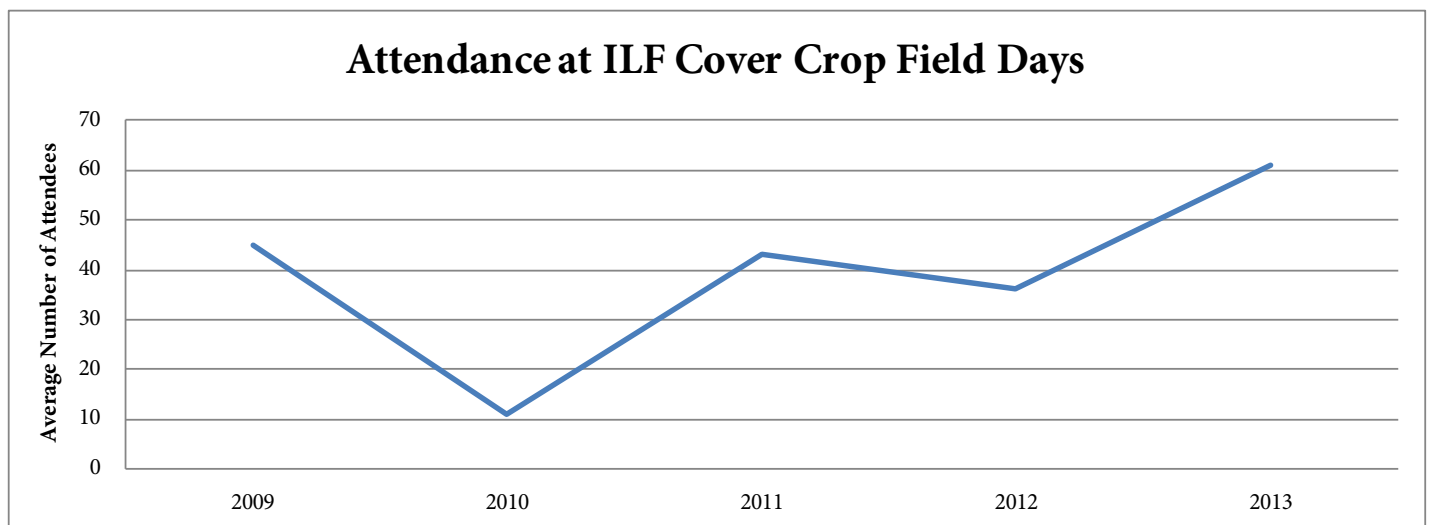
+The percentages in this column represent which seed was included in their mixture. Numbers do not add up to 100 percent because they are picking multiple choices.

Cover Crop Findings Broken Down by Number of Years Experience			
	2013 first year n=109	Second year n=159	More than two years n=87
# of new cover crop acres	11,670	22,439	19,493
Average # of acres per respondent	109	141	224
Type of cover crop	60% single 40% mix	58% single 42% mix	51% single 49% mix
I discussed +/- of using cover crops with my land-owners	66%	72%	68%
I discussed/networked conservation and water quality improvement ideas with other farmers in my area	64%	69%	77%
If yes, how successful were you	One other: 25 Two+: 20	One other: 43 Two+: 31	One other: 22 Two+: 29

It will be interesting to see how many of these acres are prevented planning or how many of the acres represent longer-term adoption

### ILF Cover Crop Field Days by the Numbers

Year	Average attendance	# of cover crop field days
2009	45	3
2010	11	2
2011	43	8
2012	36	14
2013	61	24



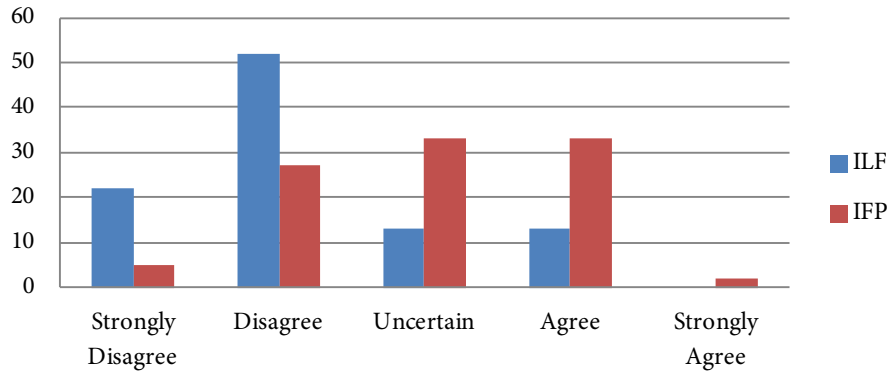
## ILF Evaluation Report Findings Compared to Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll

	Average age of respondents
Iowa Learning Farms	51
Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll	64

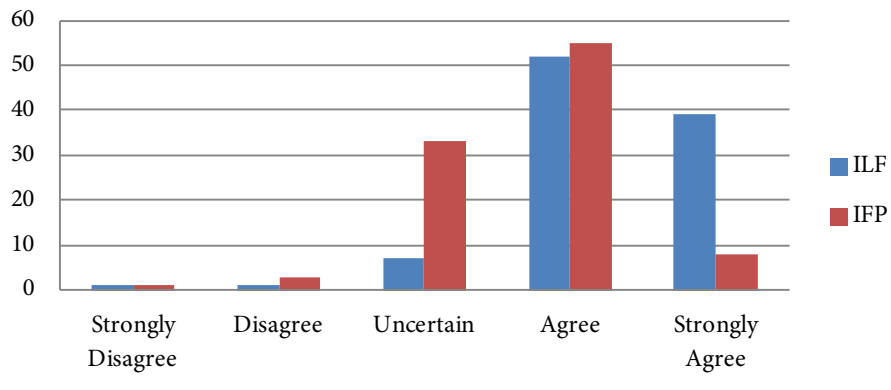
2013 Iowa Learning Farms Evaluations			
n=408	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
I don't know enough about cover crops to use them	74%	13%	13%
Cover crops can improve soil productivity	2%	7%	91%
Cover crops reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses	2%	11%	87%
Cover crops can delay spring planting	21%	40%	38%
Cover crops can reduce soil erosion significantly	2%	1%	97%
I don't have the necessary equipment for cover crops	54%	13%	33%

2010 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll			
n=1,360	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
I don't know enough about cover crops to use them	32%	33%	35%
Cover crops can improve soil productivity	4%	33%	63%
Cover crops reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses	7%	35%	58%
Cover crops can delay spring planting	17%	46%	38%
Cover crops can reduce soil erosion significantly	4%	14%	83%
I don't have the necessary equipment for cover crops	29%	31%	40%

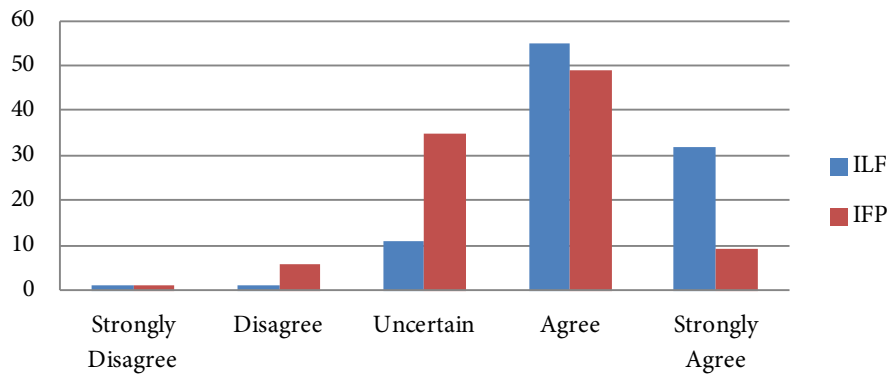
### I don't know enough about cover crops to use them



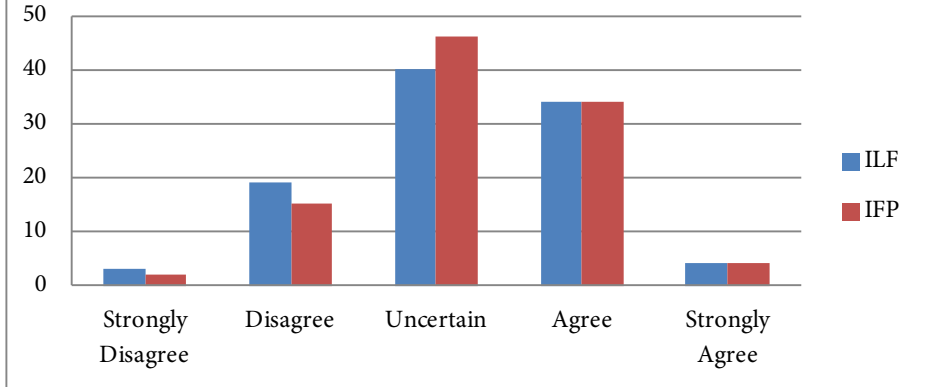
### Cover crops can improve soil productivity



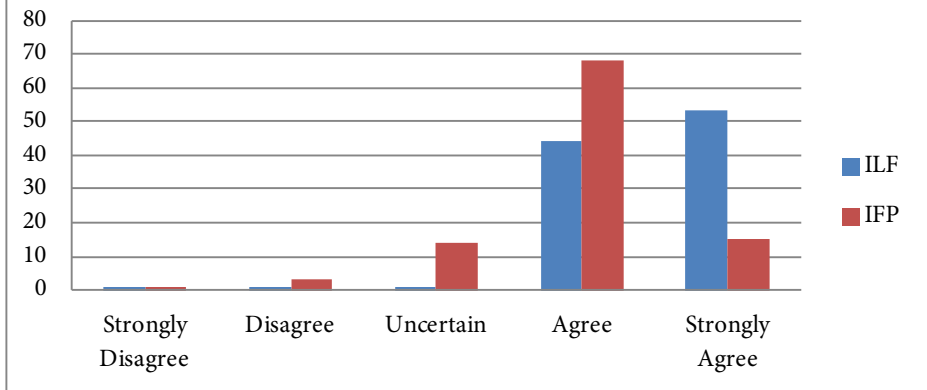
### Cover crops reduce nitrogen and phosphorus



### Cover crops can delay spring planting



### Cover crops can significantly reduce soil erosion



### I don't have the necessary equipment for cover crops

