

FROM THE GROUND UP

APRIL 2026
PROJECT
UPDATE

Making Conservation Practices Work For Farmers

Lime and Mid-Summer Pasture Management

These ranchers formed a research node this spring and have decided to explore the impact of liming their pastures AND compare the effect of mowing, trampling and crimping their fescue midsummer on soil health and pasture productivity. We've just taken baseline soil samples and will be applying lime this spring.

Seeding Warm Season Annuals into Pasture

This group just treated their seeds with vermicompost tea and Green Lightning. This year they are exploring ways to increase establishment in their pastures with better seed to soil contact, including: grazing before broadcasting, trampling, drilling and chisel plowing. The science team will be out in a few weeks time to measure growth before the fields are grazed.



Treating seeds in west-central MO

Alternative Soil Amendments

These ranchers in SW MO decided to change their research treatments this year. They are now comparing the impacts of worm castings and a foliar-applied biological against a control and urea, on soil health and pasture yield and quality. They applied their treatments by drone in March and the science team have just been out to take the first forage measurements of the season.



Applying amendments by drone in SW MO

Simple vs. Diverse Cover Crops

Northwest Ohio saw very little rain in the second half of last year, just as these farmers were trying to get their early cover crops established in August and again in the fall for their rye. When we sampled cover crops this spring, the growth was less than expected. Weather variability is a factor that we're trying to account for in FTGUp, with weather stations installed at every farm. The farmers decided to keep their treatments the same and to try again this year.

Winter Cover Crops

The cover crops planted by these farmers did not die over the winter as we expected! The farmers and science team adapted well - working together to take samples and measurements this spring before termination. This group also welcomed three new members this year.

Welcome!

New!

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON-FARM IN SPRING 2026?

Our second field season has been kicking off in earnest and farmers and scientist alike are busy!

Grain Cover Crops

These farmers added winter cover crops to their corn and soybean rotations. The science team has just finished measuring cover crop biomass using physical samples and drones just prior to termination. We will be comparing corn and soybean yields this fall.

Daikon Radish Cover Crops

This group learned a lot about daikon radish seeding rates in their first season and will make these uniform across all their farms this fall. This summer they'll be weighing all the vegetables from their treatment and control plots to measure the effect on yield.

Winter Annual Forages

These farmers grew triticale or rye at forage rates and cover crop rates over winter. They are interested in impacts on soil health and corn silage yield. The science team has been out this spring measuring (including using drones) and sampling the cover crops and forage.

Legume Cover Crops

The science team's sampling timeline is determined by each farmer's complex organic rotation in this group. We're sampling frost-seeded clover and peas this spring on some farms and will sample on other farms this summer/fall.

Fungicide Use Patterns

A couple of the farmers in this group decided to shift their treatment layouts to ensure they get data on every treatment across their corn and soybean rotation. We're also gearing up for a busy season of disease scouting this summer to assess the impact of the fungicide treatments.



Disease scouting in central OH

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR ON-FARM RESEARCH NODES:

FTGUp.org/the-project/on-farm-research-nodes/



WHAT HAVE THE OTHER WORKGROUPS BEEN DOING?

Off-farm research: We've conducted focus groups with farmers, public officials, and private agribusinesses in Wayne Co., OH and Lafayette Co., MO about incentives and barriers to adopting conservation practices, and are scheduling a focus group with non-operating landlords in each county.

National markets: Our Policy and Markets Advisors have shared insights into the landscape at the national and regional level, and we are conducting research into the availability and fit of state, federal, and private incentive programs for the conservation practices chosen by farmer leaders in FTGUp.

Education: We're excited to welcome 9 interns from Central State University and Lincoln University of Missouri to FTGUp at the end of May! The interns will be based with supervisors across OH and MO and integrated into all aspects of the project.



SPOTLIGHT ON AMBASSADORSHIP, COMMS, AND EXTENSION



We've had an exciting few months engaging with agricultural communities at major conferences and amplifying our impact through media features and farmer-led research storytelling!



FTGUp farmers braved winter storms to speak at the **Urban & Small-Scale Farm Connection Conference** at CSU. We participated in a panel on "Farmer-Led, On-Farm Collaborative Research".

Watch the recording here:

go.osu.edu/centralstatepodcast



In January, the FTGUp team joined more than 260 farmers, researchers, extension agents, and other stakeholders at the 2026 Ohio State **Organic Grains Conference** in Sandusky. Farmer Leader, Scott Stoller, shared insights into the research that he is doing with four other farmers in Wayne County, OH on harvesting vs. plowing under leguminous cover crops.

Brownfield Ag held a roundtable with FTGUp on "Tracking the Real-World Impact of Conservation Practices." Moderated by Brent Barnett, the discussion featured farmer leaders Susan Jaster from MO, Kris Swartz from OH, FTGUp Director Doug Jackson-Smith and MO Research Coordinator Kamal Deep.

The full interview is available here: go.osu.edu/brownfieldag



We're front page news!

Farm and Dairy's article by Paul Rowley highlights two of our farmer-leaders in Ohio, Greg Steffen and Scott Stoller, and their research about long-term soil sustainability and balancing productivity with conservation practices.

Read the full article here: go.osu.edu/farmdairy



Earth Day: "We come from very different places ... but we share the same conviction: You must hold a certain love for nature and the earth to want to be a farmer. On our farms, we are focused on soil health, which ultimately leads to human health." OH farmer Donee Boykin and Missouri rancher Chad Fisher shared their thoughts in a wonderful op-ed.

Read the story through

Agri-Pulse:

go.osu.edu/ftgupearthday

FTGUp farmer leaders Fred Yoder and Josh Yoder joined our extension team on the Agronomy and Farm Management Podcast for an engaging conversation about why they got involved in the project and what they hope to find out with their fungicide research in central OH. Find them on the **OSU Agronomy and Farm Management** podcast wherever you listen! **Episode 181.**

2025 MO AND OH FARMER POLL: RESULTS AVAILABLE!

To assess whether putting farmers in the lead can move the needle on farmer use of conservation practices, we conducted a stratified random sample mail survey of farmers in Missouri and Ohio in the spring of 2025. The baseline survey asked a wide range of questions about farm management practices and farm operation characteristics that will be used to track changes over time. A total of 579 farmers responded.

Read about the results of the survey in our **Highlights Report and Technical Report:**

ftgup.org/resources/