



NEWS RELEASE

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Soil Health Partnership Expands New Program to Grow Network and Data

Phase 2 of pilot Associate Program announced on World Soil Day

(ST. LOUIS) – Just in time for World Soil Day on December 5, the [Soil Health Partnership](#) announced it is expanding a pilot project to give more farmers access to the soil health network.

As the organization launches phase 2 of its pilot Associate Program, it will invite 75 farmers to enroll in 2019. This will enable more farmers to join SHP in its mission of using science and data to support farmers in adopting agricultural practices that improve the economic and environmental sustainability of the farm.

The economic component of soil health has taken on an increasing level of urgency during a difficult farm economy, said Shefali Mehta, executive director of the Soil Health Partnership.

“We’ve seen increasing demand from farmers who would like to join our network,” Mehta said. “Expanding the pilot phase of our Associate Program provides a great number of farmers with access to a scientific platform to evaluate soil health as part of a comprehensive management strategy.”

Joining the Associate Program during the pilot phase will give farmers access to no-cost soil health sampling and results. The program will provide data insights and reports on how making a change, like growing cover crops, impacts their soil.

“I strongly believe sustainability has to apply to farm economics, as well as the environment, and we’re seeing that economic need become increasingly critical,” Mehta said.

After enrolling 25 farms in the pilot program in 2018, phase 2 will bring the number of associate sites to 100. The SHP plans a full-scale launch of the Associate Program for 2020, when even more farmers can join.

A less-intensive version of the SHP’s 115 Full Partner sites enrolled in the long-term data project, Associate Program farmers will commit to a 2-year project enrollment. Yearly soil health testing will measure key metrics. Enrolled farmers will choose between the following three treatment options:

- Cover crop vs. no cover crop
- Tillage vs. less intrusive tillage, or no-till
- Nutrient management (comparison of different nutrient sources)

The program will also help SHP include more cropping systems and geographies, as well as strengthen the breadth and depth of data, Mehta said.

Farmers interested in learning more can visit the [Soil Health Partnership website](#).

An initiative of the National Corn Growers Association, the SHP is an innovative long-term research effort that aims to show U.S. farmers how sustainability through soil health can also lead to increased profitability. There are 140 farms enrolled in the program in 14 states, including the 25 pilot sites from phase 1 of the Associate Program. It is the largest farmer-led soil health research project of its kind.

World Soil Day was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to celebrate one of our most vital resources. Soil is essential for filtering pollutants from our water, storing carbon, and providing the foundation for an estimated 95 percent of the world's food supply.

About the Soil Health Partnership

The Soil Health Partnership is a farmer-led initiative that fosters transformation in agriculture through improved soil health, benefiting both farmer profitability and the environment. With more than 140 working farms enrolled in 14 states, the SHP tests, measures and advances progressive farm management practices that will enhance sustainability and farm economics for generations to come. SHP brings together broad and diverse partners to work towards common goals. Administered by the National Corn Growers Association, the SHP's vision is driven by initial and continuing funding and guidance from NCGA, Bayer, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, The General Mills Foundation, Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, National Wheat Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, the Pisces Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation. For more, visit SoilHealthPartnership.org.

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