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## **NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Cover Crop Inter-Seeder Available in 2018**

“I want something growing in my soil 365 days of the year.” This is what more and more farmers are saying as they look into how soil functions and maintains a healthy environment for billions of beneficial organisms. Maximizing days with living roots in the soil is foundational. This is why the Bradford County Conservation District (BCCD) is bringing a new piece of farm equipment to our fields in 2018 – a high clearance cover crop inter-seeder. With 6 feet of ground clearance, the inter-seeder can drive through a standing crop of corn to plant seeds that will begin to grow as the corn nears maturity. The inter-seeder will also be used to plant cover crop into soybeans, a crop that rarely is followed by a cover crop in our area because of its late harvest. The inter-seeder will be available for farms in Bradford and surrounding counties. Farmers should contact their county conservation district to inquire about scheduling it at their farm.



The inter-seeder is a Walker 44 drive unit that was once used as a sprayer but has been converted to plant seeds. Up to 3,000 lbs. of seed is carried in a large dry box and is delivered via air to drop tubes placed 30 inches apart on a boom reaching 90 feet in width. This planting method can cover a lot of acres in a hurry - one acre planted for every 500 feet traveled. BCCD purchased this machine as a sub-recipient of grant funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the Upper Susquehanna Coalition. Grant funds are helping cover costs of owning and operating the inter-seeder. Farmers will pay approximately \$15/acre to hire the inter-seeder, plus the cost of seed. A trained operator will come with the machine so the farmer will only need to direct it to where planting is to happen. Two options for cover crop seed are being offered. First is annual ryegrass, able to grow in a wide range of conditions providing superior ground cover and root depth. The second option is a mix of cereal rye grain, crimson clover, vetch and radish which will grow readily in various conditions, provide good ground cover, and if left to grow long enough in the spring will produce nitrogen to be used by the next crop. You

can learn more about the inter-seeder by contacting your county conservation district or by visiting the BCCD's web page at <http://bccdpa.com/interseeder>.

“Cover” Crops are becoming standard practice for many farms today. Planting this second crop costs money but farms are finding that the investment in protecting and keeping soil alive is paying its way, to the point where they consider it essential. The cover crop will hold soil in place and help build the soil's structure which is so integral to absorbing moisture and resisting compaction and erosion. Sometimes the cover crop that grows all winter is harvested for feed in the spring. Often times it is not harvested at all, but left as fertilizer for the next crop. As summer comes to an end, many acres of corn are harvested for silage. This is when the entire plant is harvested (stalk, leaves, cob and kernels) and chopped into a mixture, providing an excellent feed for dairy cows (and beef cows too). When corn is harvested this way, little cover is left for the soil, but there is often time to start a cover crop. If this cover crop can be planted in early September, most years will provide enough growing time for it to establish and continue growing slowly through the winter. When corn is harvested for grain however, it is usually too late in the year to get a cover crop started. This is where the inter-seeder comes in. Cover crop seed can be planted in August or September and begin to grow while the corn stands awaiting a later harvest. Soybeans are also left in the field after they stop growing, allowing the beans to dry. The inter-seeder can plant seeds under the growing soybean plants in September allowing the cover crop to germinate as soon as sunlight begins to penetrate through the thinning soybean canopy. Soybean fields have proven particularly susceptible to soil erosion through the winter, making these fields ideal candidates for a cover crop. Contact your county conservation district today to learn more about helping soil thrive all year!

The Bradford County Conservation District is committed to helping people manage resources wisely. You may contact the Bradford County Conservation District at (570) 485-3144, [Kevin.L.Brown@pa.nacdnet.net](mailto:Kevin.L.Brown@pa.nacdnet.net), or visit our web page at [www.bccdpa.com](http://www.bccdpa.com).