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**For Immediate Release**

October 20, 2015

**Researchers Receive \$1 Million Grant to Study Cropping Systems  
In the Western Great Plains**

(Burlington, Colo.)

**Addressing the needs of farmers and producers**

Plant Scientists with Colorado State University will be studying cover cropping choices and strategies, thanks to a successful grant application by Colorado State University Soil and Crop Sciences Department's Dr. Meagan Schipanski.

"This study came about when farmers and producers came to us," said Schipanski. "The national buzz about cover crops and crop rotations hasn't really included a discussion of how those techniques can be used in our climate, where we have less water available."

This project will look at the economic and soil quality trade-offs of different practices. Traditional farming practices plant fields with a single crop such as corn or wheat to reduce farmers' short-term risk related to crop losses and low yields. By rotating crops or integrating mixtures of grazed forage crops, farmers might reduce their long-term risk by improving the quality of their soil to the benefit of all the crops they plant. The challenge is in reducing short-term risk while managing the soil for longer-term benefits.

**A broad collaboration**

Diversifying crop rotations and the use of cover crops has maintained yields while reducing environmental impacts for farmers in other parts of the United States, and Schipanski and her team want to see what rotation strategies can be best utilized here in Colorado as well as in Kansas and western Nebraska. Schipanski is collaborating with a number of other researchers in CSU Extension, her own Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, and the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

"This project is a great example of the type of collaboration we need among CSU researchers, Extension, and producers to identify and evaluate the potential of new technologies and management approaches for our region," said Mark Brick, acting head of CSU's Department of Soil and Crop Sciences.

As the winter months approach, Schipanski plans to attend winter-grower meetings and to recruit additional farmers to participate in her study. Right now, there are six farmers willing to take part in the research and Schipanski would like to get that number to 10.

"On-farm research is an essential component of this study," Schipanski said. "We would like to utilize a wide spectrum of farmers from across the region to help validate our recommendations for new crop rotation practices." As a result, on-farm research will be conducted with Extension's Golden Plains Area in Northeastern Colorado. Ron Meyer and Wilma Trujillo, Colorado State University Plant Scientists in Burlington and Ft. Morgan will be working closely with local producers in an effort to "ground truth" cover cropping research results.

SOURCE: Jason Kosovski, Colorado State University

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