

ORGANIC VISION

Indiana Organic Network
September 2025

This summer was a busy one for the Indiana Organic Network. From flying drones to discussing soil health reports with organic farmers and everything in between, the team stayed busy. Now as summer fades to fall we wonder, why do trees love fall? Because they can let loose and leave their worries behind! With fall nearing, this issue will cover our past summer activities and look at what's to come.

ION extension specialists were busy planning and helping host important outreach events this summer for the organic farming community. With focus on different areas such as organic forages, organic vegetables, and organic grains, ION was able to host, present, and support 7 field day events over the course of the summer. The field days were important outreach events that provided resources and educated the public on issues and topics the ION extension and outreach team thought valuable and helpful. ION was also able to partner with Diverse Corn Belt and Urban Soil Health to make these field days come to life and allow participants to gain new experiences.

Some exciting events that ION was able to host this summer included the Northern Indiana Organic Forage Field Day and a Farmer-to-Farmer Organic Field Day.

Pictured on the top right are Northern Indiana Organic Forage Field Day participants engaging in a lesson and the bottom right photo is the welcome sign from the day.



The Northern Indiana Organic Forage Field Day was hosted in northern Indiana with a focus on organic forage production and fly control. 90 organic producers from the area were present with the help of county extension educators Jeff Burbrink, Kathryn Jennings, Brieanna Slonaker and John Woodmansee.

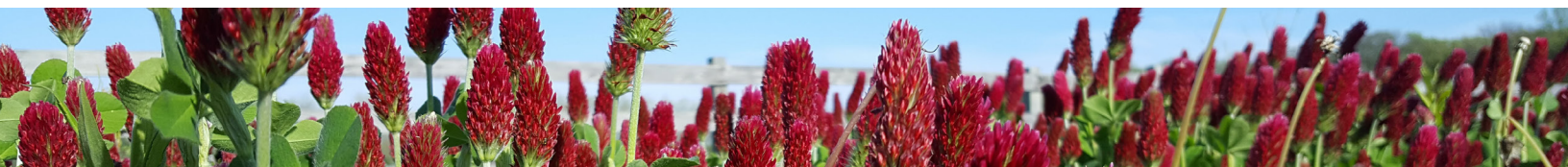
Later in August, ION was also able to host a Farmer-to-Farmer field day with organic grain producer Mike Stites at Rex Stites Farms in Howard County. This time with help from county educator Mathias Ingle, ION was able to make Mike Stites' dream of hosting this field day a reality. The day overall was a success with 113 participants from four different states and the event provided farmer testimonies and organic farming educational opportunities. A short video from the day can be viewed on the ION Instagram page by scanning the QR code.



Farmer-to-Farmer Field Day!



Pictured above are ION Farmer-to-Farmer Field Day participants at Rex Stites Farms in Howard County, IN.



SOIL HEALTH MONITORING AND USING AI-DRIVEN GEOSPATIAL MODELS

ION's team of scientists have been busy at work monitoring soil health using AI-driven geospatial models. Dr. Sidd Paul's GEMS lab team was busy this summer collecting soil samples, cropping stages, and field conditions from organic farms across the state. The campaign was coordinated by postdoc Dr. Fitsum Teshome to use high-precision RTK GPS technology and drone flight in order to collect from different production systems such as permanent pasture, annual forage, grain, and vegetables. These samples were collected at 0-15cm and 15-30cm depths to gather a variety of soil health parameters.

Almost 500 soil samples have been collected and analyzed to look for organic matter, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium, soil pH, buffer pH, and cation exchange capacity. Specifically, soil moisture content was examined to determine moisture status during data collection and where soil conditions stood across study sites.





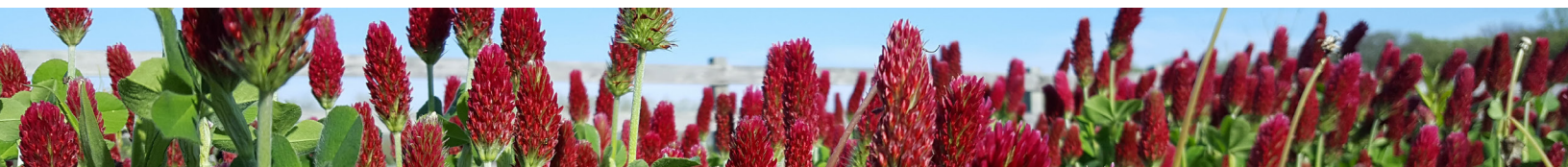
SOIL HEALTH REPORTS

During the winter and spring of 2025, the ION team designed customized soil health reports for all the farmers who participated in the 2024 Organic Farm Soil Health Census ION conducted. Over the summer, these reports were hand-delivered by our team and the material inside the reports were discussed with farmers.

One of ION's goals was to distribute soil health reports to organic farmers since before this summer's release of the reports, no collection of soil health data and distribution had been done strictly for organic farms. The reports transformed the way farmers assess the health of their soils, giving them the opportunity to compare their soil health with that of other organic farmers using similar practices. ION is excited for the impact our reports will have on the future of organic farming due to soil health's critical role in that space.



Pictured from left to right: Organic field during a farmer visit, working on soil health tests in the lab, and another organic field.



COMING *UP*

- ION will be partnering with Marbleseed to host an **organic transition workshop** for specialty crop and grain farmers. This day-long event will take place in Danville, IN at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds on November 6th 2025.
- An important date to mark on the calendar will be the **Indiana Organic Grain Farmer Meeting** at the Beck Center in West Lafayette on February 18th, 2026.
- In the coming quarter, ION team members will **expand data acquisition** efforts by collecting additional geospatial datasets, including high-resolution satellite imagery and LiDAR data, while simultaneously initiating the training of advanced AI and geostatistical models to enable deeper, more comprehensive analysis.
- During summer visits, we collected management records from each census participant. Our next steps are to **link soil health outcomes with management practices** to identify the key drivers of richer, more biologically active soils.



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