



Cover Crop Questions & Answers

Cover crops have returned to increasing importance with the re-emphasis on conservation plantings, no-till agricultural practices and government-funded programs like the United States Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP which is administered under USDA's Natural Resources and Conservation Service, or NRCS. Many farmers and landowners have had questions about the kind and quality of seed that can be planted for each of these venues. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is providing answers to some questions that farmers are asking about cover crops.

What do I have to do to qualify for programs like EQIP?

NRCS requires that seed planted for EQIP be tested for purity and germination and meets the requirements of the Pennsylvania Seed Act. The PA Seed Act requires that a seed sample be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have fewer than the established maximum of restricted noxious weeds seeds and have one percent or fewer total weed seeds.

How do I get my seed tested?

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's seed lab is accepting samples for testing. Samples submitted for testing must be *cleaned* and ready for planting. **Two pounds** of small grains are required for an official test. The fee for this testing is \$15.

If I want to sell my cover crop seeds what should I do?

Anyone selling seed of any kind in Pennsylvania must be licensed by the Department of Agriculture. An annual license fee of \$25 must accompany a completed application, which is accessible by copying and pasting this link into your browser: http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture/lib/agriculture/plantindustryfiles/forms/API-SD001_SeedLicenseForm_042006.doc. The seed being offered for sale must be tested and properly labeled.

If I just want to plant my own seed on my own land and don't care if it qualifies for EQIP do I need to have it tested?

No. You are not required to have your own seed tested when planting on your own property. However, it is always a good idea to know the quality of the seed you are planting. The licensing, regulation and testing of cover crop seed is important for at least three reasons.

First, the plowing under of a cover crop does not eliminate the perennial noxious weeds that might have been sown with the cover crop seed. Second, the quality of the seed sown will determine the effectiveness of your cover crop. And third, it's important to provide a level playing field for the sale of cover crops between the seeds-men who make a living selling seed and those individuals who might be offering discounted, low-quality seed. For more information about seed testing contact:

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