

## **2006 Wheat and Feed Grains Committee Grant Summary**

**Project Title:** PROFITABILITY OF CONSERVATION TILLAGE SYSTEMS ON-FARM FOR WHEAT AND FEED GRAINS IN ALABAMA

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### **Project Summary**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of conservation tillage systems used by farmers in Alabama on farm input usage and whole-farm profitability. This was to be completed by collecting on-farm financial and input data working with the Alabama Farm Analysis Association and via on-farm interviews. To date, 28 farmers have been identified and contacted for participation in the study. A survey of participants showed that over 80% use some form of conservation tillage and over 55 % use a cover crop on part of their farming operation. Financial data is being collected for the period 2004 to 2006 for each participant. Financial summaries of on-farm performance will be compiled when all data is collected in 2007. As another outlet for results, an economic decision aide is being developed, entitled the "Conservation Systems Learning Tool". The second version of the learning tool was distributed at the Beltwide Cotton Conference in New Orleans and displayed at the Team Conservation Tillage tent at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, GA.

### **Project Report**

The purpose of this study is to examine the economic impact of conservation tillage systems on the financial performance and use of farm inputs (e.g. fuel, fertilizer, labor) on entire farm operations in the state of Alabama. This was to be completed by collecting on-farm financial and input data working with the Alabama Farm Analysis Association and via on-farm interviews. To date, 28 farmers have been identified for participation in the study. Four additional farmers have been identified as new customers for the Alabama Farm Analysis Association. These farmers have been contacted about the study and will receive a small subsidy for their first year in the program if they participate. All farmers have been issued a one-page survey for 2004-5 about conservation tillage practices used on-farm, as well as, a confidentiality and authorization form for use of farm financial data. Surveys will be sent out again to all participants for the last growing season. All farmers contacted have responded and financial data is being collected for the period 2004 to 2006.

Surveys collected from farmers indicated that over 80% of the participants are using some form of conservation tillage on a portion of their farming operation and over 55 % are using a cover crop on part of their farming operation. Less than 15 % of the participants used conservation tillage practices on the entire farming operation in 2004-5.

Financial summaries of on-farm performance will be compiled when all data is collected. It is expected that initial estimates will be available in Spring 2007.

As another outlet for results of the study, an economic decision aide is being developed that can be deployed on the web or on CD-ROM. Data will be used to update economic evaluations in the “Conservation Systems Learning Tool”. Currently, the decision aide uses projected costs and benefits based on cost and yield estimates from using alternative farming practices. The second version of the learning tool was distributed at the Beltwide Cotton Conference in New Orleans and displayed at the Team Conservation Tillage tent at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, GA.