

Land Investment Monthly - December 2017

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The **Land Investment Monthly** is a round-up of articles and headlines published by the farm press, business media and financial publications with insights into buying, selling or investing in farm land, recreational ground or development ground.

Low corn prices make some fear cover crop usage

Growing cover crops anywhere takes trial and error, farmers said. If planted too late, plants may not have time to grow big enough to protect soil over the winter. Spring kill is tricky because glyphosate, the herbicide used to terminate rye, needs daytime temperatures of 50 to 60 degrees. If farmers wait too long in the spring, the rye plants get gangly and tougher to kill. Another fear is that cover crop growth would reduce the corn yield, especially if there's not a long enough break between the rye kill and spring planting.

"There's a real time crunch ahead of corn and soybeans," said John Holmes, an agronomist for North Central Cooperative, based in Wright County (Iowa).

With corn prices at \$3 a bushel, compared with \$7 in 2012, farmers want to have the highest yield possible and often need the longest possible growing season to do it. [Read More](#)

Don't treat your soil like dirt

Many of the benefits from improving soil health don't happen overnight. They build over time, as farmers consistently implement soil health practices like no-till, cover crops and crop rotations. But there is a way to monitor your progress: measuring the amount of organic matter in your soil. [Read More](#)

Becoming (and Remaining) a Farmer is Hard

The lack of beginning farmers in the United States is bordering on a crisis. As the latest Farm Census shows, there has been a stark decline in overall farmers—the U.S. is now home to roughly one-third the

population of farmers as in the 1930s. The average age of the American farmer is now nearly 60 years old. Although there was a measurable increase in farmers aged 25 to 34 during the 2007 and 2012 Farm Censuses, the number of farmers aged 35 to 44 during the same period dropped, suggesting many young and beginning farmers are struggling to stay on the land. [Read More](#)

Skating on Thin Ice: Bankers Gearing Up for Difficult Conversations

Dave Kohl, professor emeritus of ag economics at Virginia Tech, estimates bankers will be scrutinizing the bottom 30% of producers who are barely making a profit. At the same time, Kohl advised bankers not to forget about the top 40% of producers who are still making money and are positioned for opportunities. The middle 30% will be looking for bridge loans to get them through this continuing downturn. [Read More](#)

A growing number of young Americans are leaving desk jobs to farm

Liz Whitehurst dabbled in several careers before she ended up here, crating fistfuls of fresh-cut arugula in the early-November chill. The hours were better at her nonprofit jobs. So were the benefits. But two years ago, the 32-year-old Whitehurst - who graduated from a liberal arts college and grew up in the Chicago suburbs - abandoned Washington, D.C., for this three-acre farm in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

She joined a growing movement of highly educated, ex-urban, first-time farmers who are capitalizing on booming consumer demand for local and sustainable foods and, experts say, could have a broad impact on the food system. [Read More](#)

Building A Future With Farmers II: Results And Recommendations From The National Young Farmer Survey

Some aspects of farming are steadfast. To make a living from the land will always require risk and determination; it will reward entrepreneurship and creativity and will remain a physically demanding and emotionally consuming endeavor. Young farmers today embody those virtues, and they seek to continue the legacy of generations past. Our 2017 survey results indicate, however, that young farmers today are doing things differently. They are operating smaller farms and growing more diverse crops. They are capitalizing on demand for local food by selling directly to their customers, and they are overwhelmingly committed to sustainable and conservation-minded farming practices. Our survey results indicate that they're highly educated, increasingly racially diverse, and, despite significant barriers and relatively low income, they are optimistic about the future. [Read More](#)

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