

MARK W. BLOOMQUIST*, JODY K. STEFFEL, Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative, P.O. Box 500, Renville, MN 56284. **Spring seeded cover crop at Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative – a success story.**

The use of a spring seeded cover crop in sugar beet fields is a practice that has been increasing at Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative for the past 15 years. The practice involves seeding oats or spring wheat on sugar beet fields and incorporating the seed just prior to planting the sugar beets. This cover crop emerges just before the beets or at the same time as the sugar beet seedlings and protects the seedlings from damage due to winds. In 2003, approximately 36% of the fields in the SMBSC growing area utilized a spring seeded cover crop. During each of the seasons from 2012-2015, between 78-82% of the SMBSC sugar beet fields utilized a spring seeded cover crop. In the early 2000's, SMBSC built a water treatment plant to treat and discharge water from the processing campaign. The use of a cover crop in sugar beets provided phosphorus credits to offset the operation of the water treatment facility. As more growers utilized the cover crop program on their operations, the SMBSC Agronomic Practice Database discovered that not only did the use of cover crops provide phosphorus credits for the operation of the water treatment plant; fields that utilized a spring seeded cover crop had higher revenue per acre. During the 2003-2015 time period, spring seeded cover crop fields had a range of \$11- \$62 per acre higher revenue than non-cover crop fields.