

# Approaching Tillage and Soil Health Management

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## Farm Background

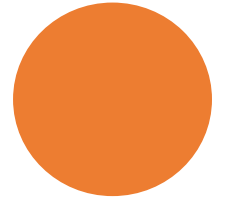
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- 7 acres of organic veg in Plainfield, VT – wholesale in VT and NYC
- Purchased land in 2014- perennial pasture and hay
- 2014: moldboard plowed to break sod, bare fallowed with disking in summer and cover cropped in fall
- 2015: First cash crop production, heavily dependent on moldboard and rototiller

# Intensive Tillage Failures

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- Soil compaction and erosion
- Soil health and moisture retention
- The worst weeds thrive with heavy tillage practices



# Reduced Tillage Approach

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- No more rototilling
- No more systemic bare fallows
- Reserve practice of flipping soil for incorporating cover crop biomass
- Tarps...



# “Large” scale tarping

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- 300' beds, 5 beds across (~1/4 acre under each tarp bank)
- Putting beds “in the bank” in early Spring for succession plantings through May and June
- Note about tarping: you are killing the weeds that germinate *before* you put the tarp down... different weed species in April than in June...



- Tarps must be dry/ drained
- Not too windy, not too hot
- Two people, too many cooks spoils the pot
- Hotdog, Hotdog (sometimes 3 hotdogs), then full length hamburgers until about the size of a pallet
- GOAL: Final folded tarp straddles one bed so we can walk in paths and pick up with pallet bin on tractor
- Move sandbags to the side of beds and pick up sandbags with second pallet bin
- Very easy to lay out for next use



Handling tarps on a tractor scale

When someone says that no till farming is better for the soil

What are our responsibilities as farmers versus land stewards?  
What are our assumptions?  
What are the tensions?

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- Efficiencies lead to increased production, increased profits, and higher wages
- Feed the soil by incorporating cover crops versus mulching “undisturbed” soils
- Labor is expensive and oil is cheap.
- Lastly... climate trumps all.



No- till images from *Cover Cropping in No- Till Systems*. Mays, Daniel.  
“Growing for Market” Feb 2022.

# Future Plans?

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Single  
pass  
stone  
burier?

Mow and  
chisel and disc  
and disc  
and...?

Mow CC, Mold  
board, time?

