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## **Cover Crop Seed Availability Hinders Cover Crop Adoption by Agricultural Producers**

As more aggressive action has been taken to confront the climate crisis under the Biden Administration, environmental sustainability issues have become more relevant. Interest in the value of cover crops as a means to preserve and improve

cropland has continually increased. Cover crop use has once again been on the rise (2017 Census of Agriculture) as our producers continually seek a balance between environmental and financial sustainability. Among the challenges reported by producers, cover crop seed availability is an issue. Many producers have also said cover crop seed costs are too high and that the additional cost of planting and managing a cover crop stymies cover crop adoption.

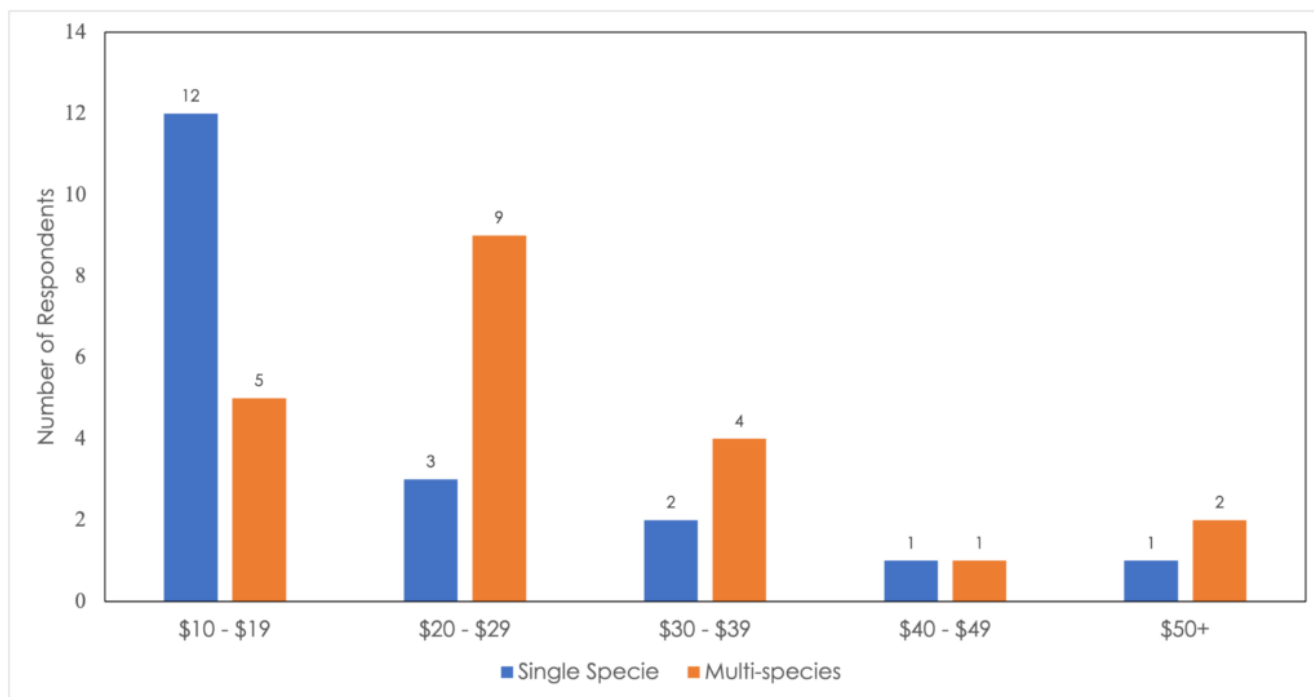
The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service conducted a cover crop survey with cotton, corn, and peanut producers throughout Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, from January 28, 2021, to March 31, 2021. Figure 1 illustrates the cost of cover crop seed based on the number of species in the cover crop blend. The average seed cost of single specie cover crops was \$23.53 per acre, and for multi-species cover crops, it was \$25.88 per acre. Most producers using cover crop monoculture indicate their seed cost ranges from \$10 to \$19 per acre. For mixed cover crops, there is more of a spread in the responses, with the \$20-\$29 range being the most common.

To solve the challenge of the availability of cover crop seed, some producers reported that they harvested their cover crop seed to either sell it or plant it the following year. However, most farmers were not harvesting their cover crop seed. A few possible explanations for not harvesting and selling seed could be machinery related, time, seed germination, or understanding the value of the seed if they were to sell. Another possibility for not keeping seed is that they have chosen either not to plant a cover crop the following year or to plant a different type. One last explanation could be that farmers participating in a cost-share program could not harvest the cover crop. Most conservation cost-share programs won't allow producers to harvest seed to sell or save for seed.

A cover crop is relatively expensive to plant. Most farmers who responded to our survey in these three states do not

currently graze or harvest their cover crop, which would help to offset some of that expense. It is important for farmers to find and adopt the most beneficial cropping practices, which may include cover crops. As more producers become interested in planting cover crops, emerging local business opportunities may materialize for specialized seed companies to identify and stock the cover crop seed mixes that are of interest.

**Figure 1. Number of producers reporting specified ranges of cover crop seed cost per acre for single specie cover crops and multi-species cover crops for cotton, peanut, and corn producers in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Total respondents are 40.**



References and Resources:

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture. Complete data available at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

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[contact@southernagtoday.org](mailto:contact@southernagtoday.org)



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