

The Need for and Attempts at Relating Soil Quality Assessment to Economic Return. (S03-andrews160447-Oral)

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Abstract:

Farm profitability is so tenuous that for farmers to invest in many soil quality-building practices, a clear link between soil quality (SQ) and economic return must be demonstrated. In 2000, we held focus groups with farmers from IL, IA, and CA to assess needs for and uses of SQ information and assessment tools. We also compared assessment outcomes with economic data for several existing data sets. The farmers unanimously defined soil quality in terms of economics, either as increased productivity or reduced input costs, with an emphasis on long-term net revenues. When asked about what they would like a SQ assessment to do, many shared an interest in research on the relationship between SQ and economics. Other economic barriers identified included market prices, incentives (or green payments), and uncertain land tenure. Validation of the SQ assessment tool resulted in correlations between SQ and net return or yield ranging from 0.61, 0.74, 0.94, using data sets from IA, CA, and GA, respectively, that varied in

practice, area, soil, and climate. While the need for economic information related to SQ is clear, definitive relationships are only beginning to be identified.

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