

Can organic cropping systems be as profitable as conventional systems?

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Which is a better strategy, specializing in one crop or diversified cropping? Is conventional cropping more profitable than organic farming? Is it less risky?

To answer these questions, the University of Wisconsin's College of [Agriculture](#) and Life Sciences and Michael Fields Agricultural Institute agronomists established the Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial (WICST) in 1990. This research is funded by USDA-ARS.

Systems ranging from species-diverse pasture and organic systems to more specialized conventional alfalfa-based forage and corn-based grain systems were compared at two sites in southern Wisconsin from 1993 to 2006.

Crop production analysis was published in the 2008 March-April issue of [Agronomy Journal](#) while this companion article focuses on the net returns and associated risk exposure of these systems. Full research results from this current study are presented by Chavas et al. in the 2009 March-April issue of *Agronomy Journal*.

"In our study we found that diversified systems were more profitable than monocropping," explains Joshua Posner, University of Wisconsin.

With feed grade premiums the organic systems were more profitable than the Midwestern standards of continuous corn, no-till corn and soybeans, and intensively managed alfalfa.

Rotational grazing of dairy heifers was as profitable as the organic systems. And to our surprise, including risk premiums into the evaluation did not change the ranking of the systems. This study indicates that governmental policy that supports mono-culture systems is outdated and support should be shifted to programs that promote crop rotations and organic farming practices.

More information: View study's abstract [here](#).

Source: American Society of Agronomy

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