

Dec. 9, 2019

Cover crops gaining ground

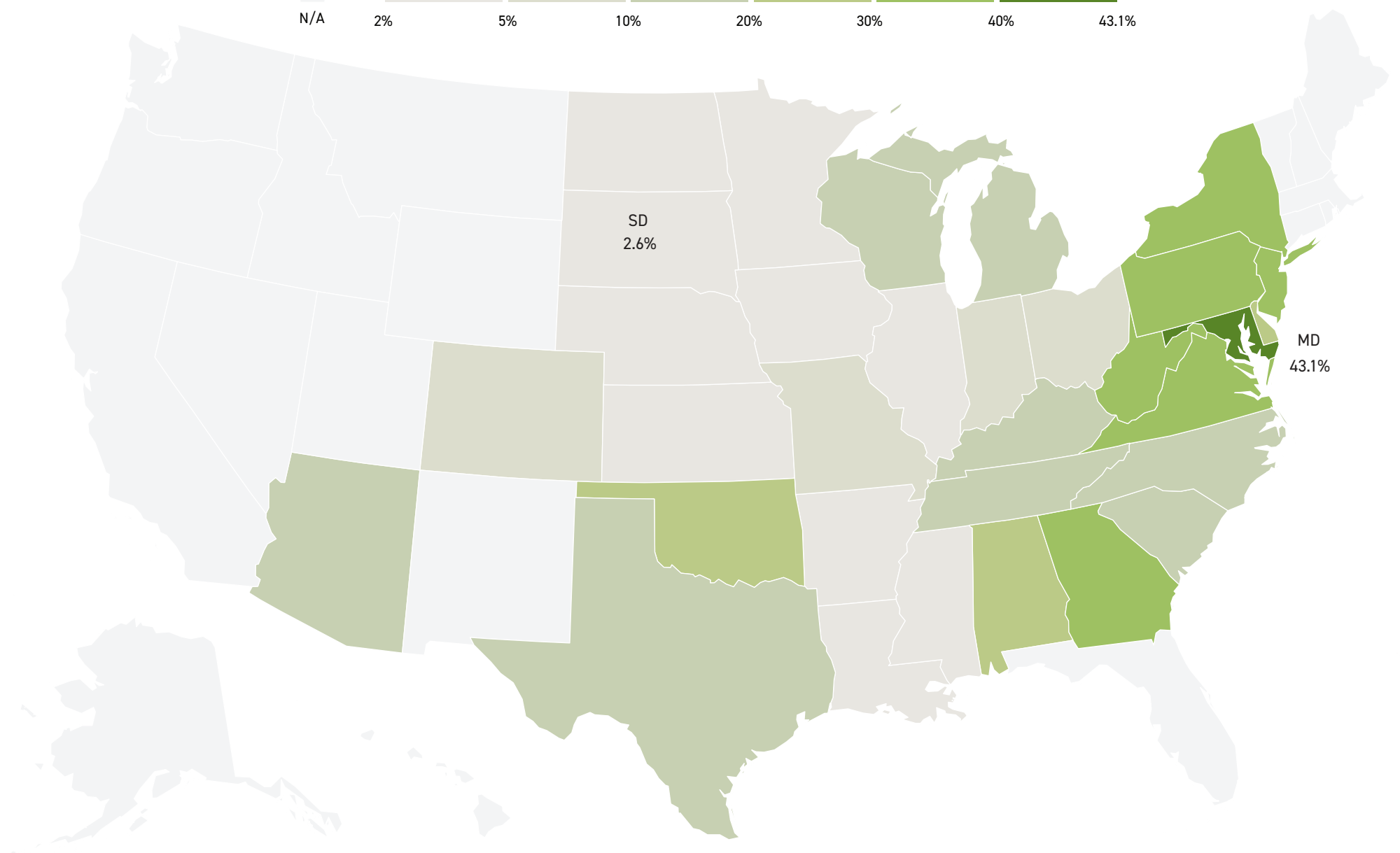
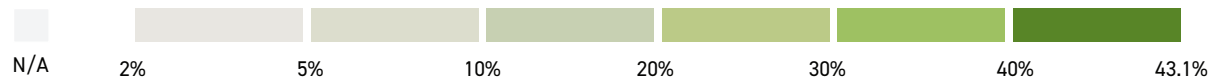
BY PATTERSON CLARK, POLITICO PRO DATAPOINT

Momentum continues to grow for the use of cover crops, off-season plantings that improve soil, hold moisture, resist erosion, help suppress pests and diseases — and increase yields of commodity crops. Cover crops increase organic matter and balance microbial activity in soils, which can enhance the sequestration of carbon dioxide.

The East Coast supports the greatest portion of commodity acres with cover crops ...

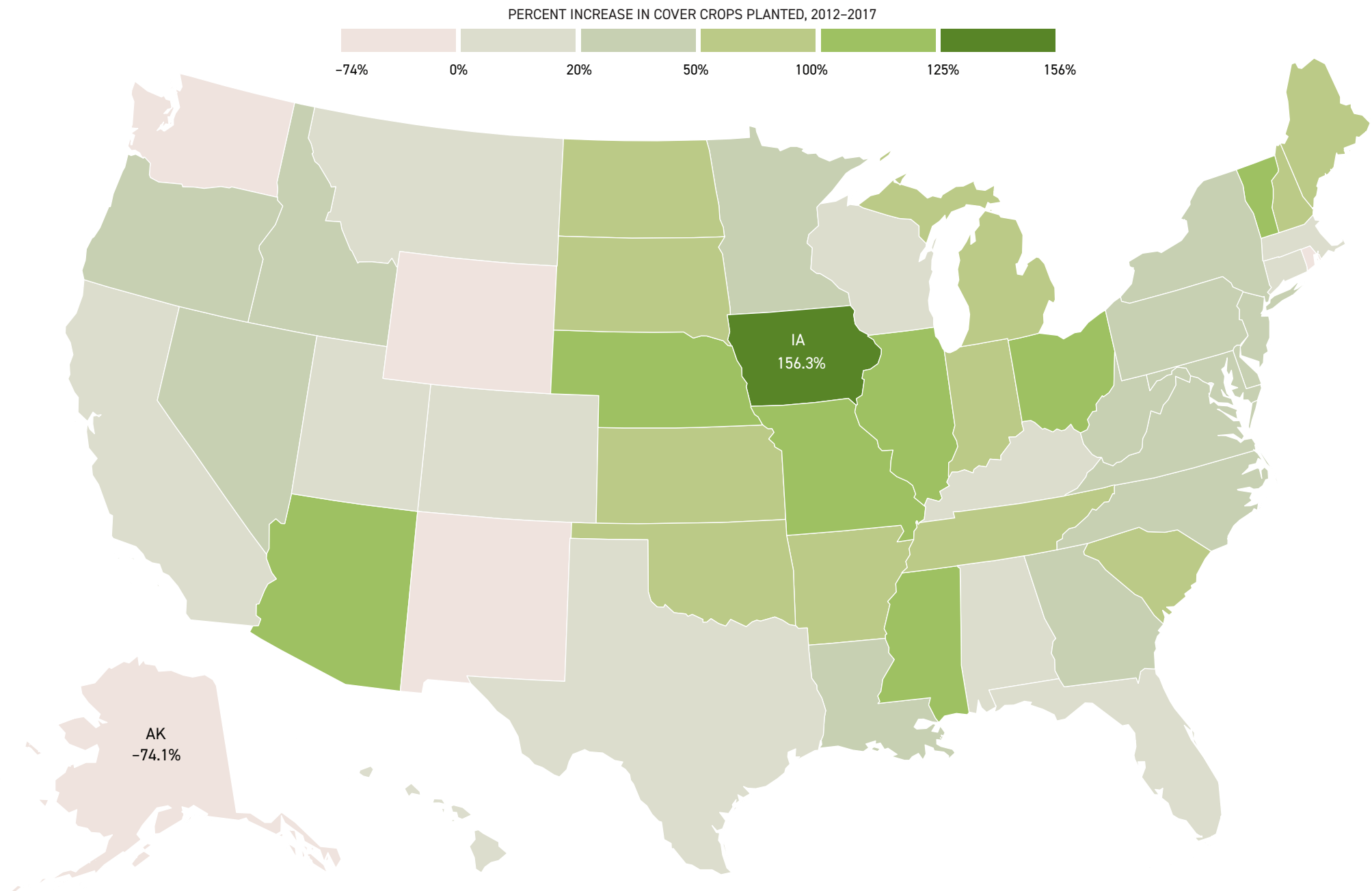
Plotted here are states with significant acreage of the commodities corn, soybeans or cotton. In most of the included states, cover crops were likely planted on some acreage with other crops, such as small grains, sorghum, vegetables, vineyards and orchards. Since 2017, Maryland's Department of Agriculture has reported cover crop acreage at more than 50 percent.

PERCENT OF COMMODITY ACREAGE (CORN, SOYBEANS OR COTTON) PLANTED WITH COVER CROPS, 2017

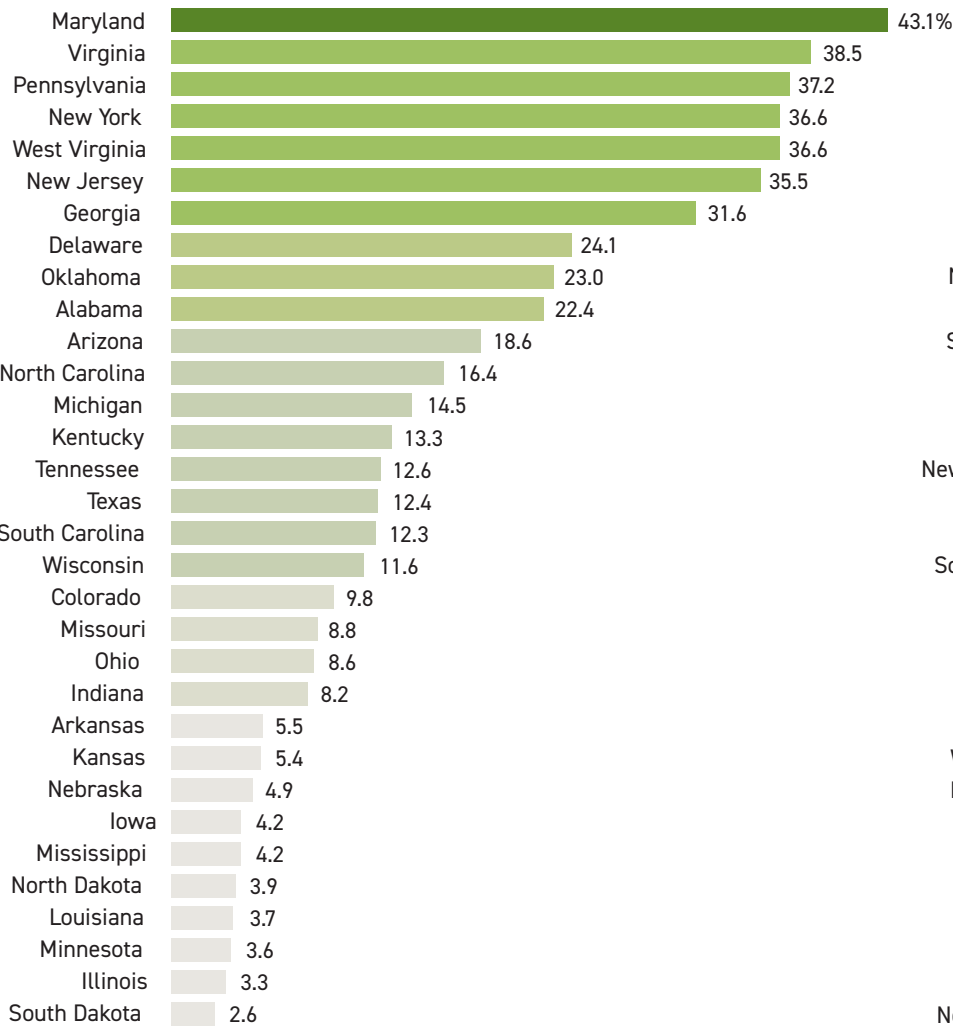


... but the Midwest is rapidly increasing its share.

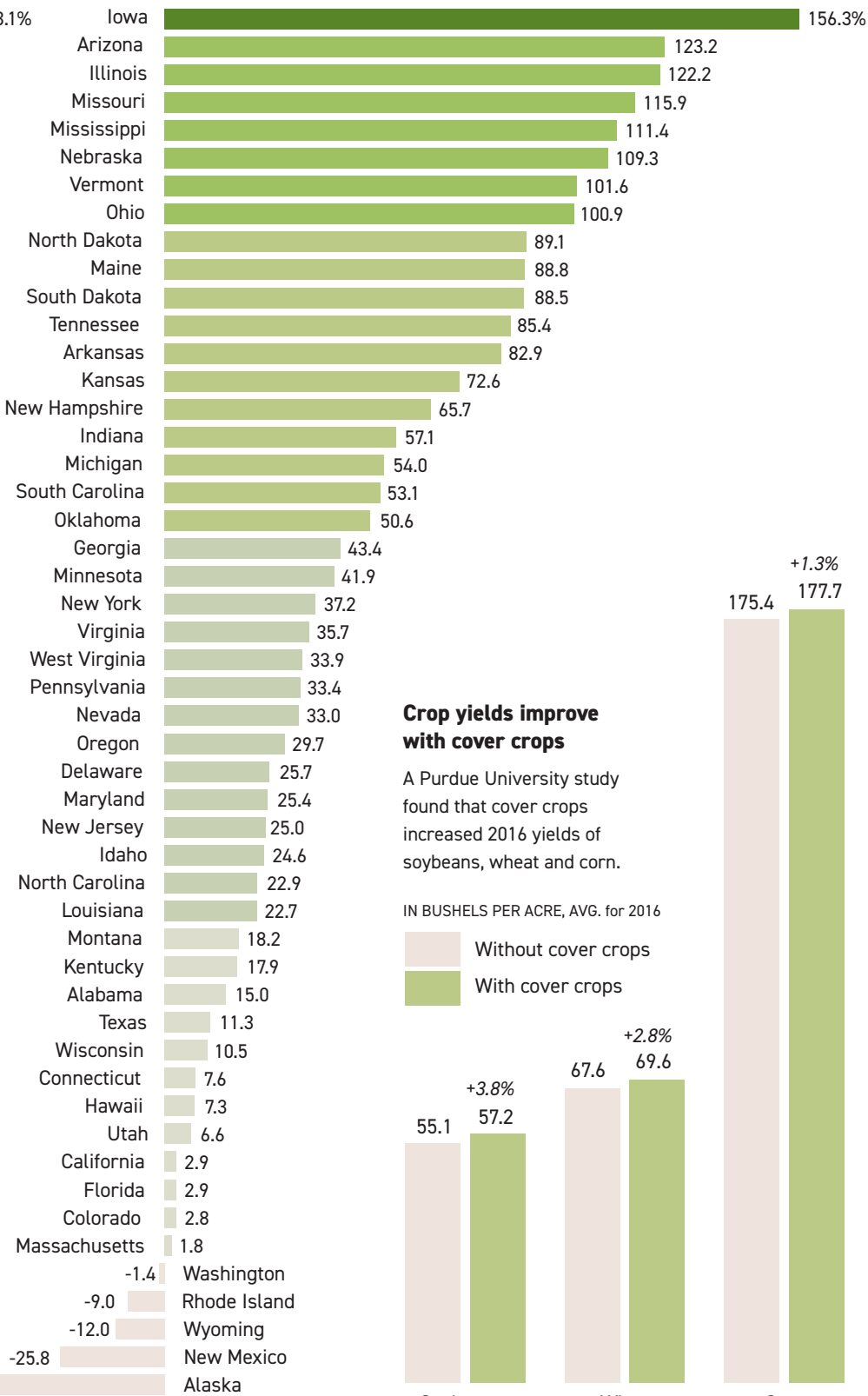
Overall, cover crop acreage increased 49.7 percent from 2012 to 2017, an annual growth rate of about 8.4 percent compounded annually, according to an analysis by Rob Myers of the University of Missouri and the NCR-SARE Program.



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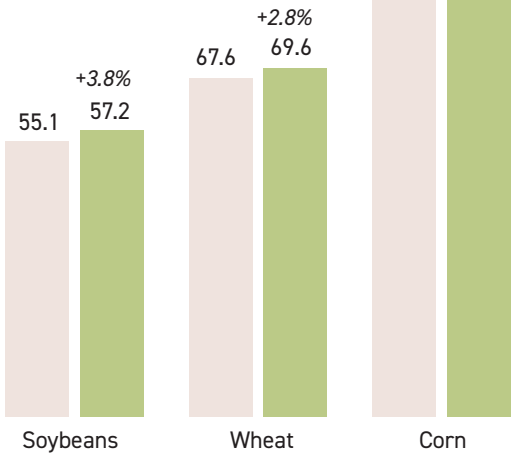
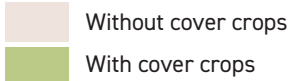
PERCENT INCREASE IN COVER CROPS PLANTED, 2012-2017



Crop yields improve with cover crops

A Purdue University study found that cover crops increased 2016 yields of soybeans, wheat and corn.

IN BUSHELS PER ACRE, AVG. for 2016



Sources: Census of Agriculture; Rob Myers, University of Missouri and NCR-SARE Program