

September 25, 2025

Dear Grower,

You are being asked to participate in or be a part of a research study on compost use in vegetable production. Your participation is voluntary, which means that you may choose not to participate at any time. Your willingness to share your time and expertise is invaluable to advancing sustainable farming practices throughout Indiana and beyond.

About This Research

This comprehensive survey is part of a larger research project examining how compost application affects soil health, crop performance, and farm management practices. As an experienced vegetable grower, your insights and practices will contribute to a better understanding of how compost can be effectively utilized in diverse farming operations across our state.

What to Expect

We estimate that our online survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. If you agree to take part in the on-farm soil sampling and analysis portion of the survey, then our research team will visit your farm to conduct soil and compost sampling, which should take about 45 minutes to complete. The survey covers various aspects of your farming operation, with particular focus on:

- Your compost sources, application methods, and timing
- How compost use integrate with other farm management practices
- Economic considerations and market influences
- Observed benefits and challenges from compost use
- Soil testing and management practices

While at your farm, the research team will also collect soil and compost samples and relevant crop data.

Your Privacy and Data Security

We want to assure you that:

- All individual responses will be kept strictly confidential
- Your farm and personal information will never be shared or published in any identifiable way
- Survey data will be aggregated and reported only in summary form
- Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any question
- You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences

Benefits to You and the Vegetable Growing Community

This research will directly benefit Indiana's vegetable growing community by:

- Providing evidence-based recommendations for optimizing compost use in vegetable production
- Identifying best practices that improve soil health and crop yields
- Understanding economic impacts to help growers make informed decisions about compost investments

- Developing tailored guidance for different farm sizes, production systems, and market channels
- Supporting policy and program development that assists vegetable growers

Soil and Compost Testing Results

As part of this study, we will be collecting soil and compost samples from your operation. We are pleased to provide you with detailed laboratory results from these analyses at no cost to you. These reports will include:

- Complete soil nutrient analysis
- Compost quality analysis, including nutrient content and C:N ratios
- Interpretation of results specific to your operation
- Recommendations for optimizing your compost and soil management practices

These valuable insights can help inform your future management decisions and serve as a baseline for monitoring changes over time.

Research Team and Credentials

This research is being conducted by Purdue University and is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture / National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Our team includes agricultural researchers and extension specialists with extensive experience in sustainable farming systems and compost research.

Moving Forward

We greatly appreciate your participation in this important work. The knowledge gained from this study will be shared through:

- Extension publications and fact sheets
- Farmer workshops and field days
- Scientific publications and conference presentations (i.e. Indiana Small Farms Conference)
- Online resources and decision-making tools

Your contribution will help fellow growers across Indiana and the broader region make more informed decisions about incorporating compost into their vegetable production systems.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about this research, concerns about participation, or would like additional information, please don't hesitate to contact:

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Thank You

On behalf of our entire research team and the broader vegetable growing community, thank you for your time, expertise, and commitment to advancing sustainable agriculture in Indiana. Your participation makes this important research possible, and we look forward to sharing the results with you and your fellow growers.

We recognize that your time is valuable, and we are honored that you are willing to contribute to this effort that will benefit vegetable growers for years to come.

Sincerely,

Petrus Langenhoven

Renee Wiatt

Nathan Shoaf

This research has been reviewed and approved by Purdue University's Institutional Review Board (**IRB Number 2025-1331: 2025 On-Farm Compost Impact Survey**). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please email irb@purdue.edu or call 765-494-5942.

Start the Survey

Follow this link to start the survey. https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3Q0rYacmRpGEawu

OR Scan this QR code

