



**Empire Farm Days: August 6-8, 2019**  
*Rodman Lott & Son Farms, Seneca Falls, NY*  
**877-697-7837, [www.empirefarmdays.com](http://www.empirefarmdays.com)**



Photo: 2019 Empire Farm Days' Soil Health Center Keynote Speakers, left to right: Professor Harold van Es, Ph.D., Cornell University; Jim Hershey, President of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance and owner of Hershey Farms; and Ryan Maher, Cornell Small Farms Program Research and Extension Specialist.

**PRESS RELEASE: June 2019**

### **2019 Empire Farm Days' Soil Health Center Names Keynote Presenters**

Seneca Falls, N.Y. The New York State Interagency Soil Health Working Group, New York Soil Health Initiative, and Empire Farm Days have announced the Soil Health Center keynote speakers for the 2019 Empire Farm Days in Seneca Falls, N.Y on August 6-8. The programming includes expert speakers, farmer panels, a daily luncheon, and cover crops field demonstrations.

The Soil Health Center keynote speakers for 2019 will be Professor Harold van Es, Ph.D., Cornell University; Jim Hershey, President of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance and owner of Hershey Farms; and Ryan Maher, Cornell Small Farms Program Research and Extension Specialist.

Harold van Es, a 30-year Professor of Soil Science at Cornell University, will present Soil Health: History, Geography, and Opportunities in New York State. This presentation will include results from a recent analysis of soil health in NY. His primary expertise is in digital agriculture and soil health. Harold is the lead inventor of a computational tool for precision nitrogen management: Adapt-N, winner of the Tulane Nitrogen Reduction Grand Challenge, and a comprehensive soil health management framework.

van Es, has published more than 150 scientific papers and co-authored the widely-read book *Building Soils for Better Crops*. He received degrees from the University of Amsterdam, Iowa State University, and North Carolina State University. He is a Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America (Past President, 2016), and the American Society of Agronomy.

Jim Hershey will discuss how long-term no-till and cover crop usage have improved soil health, weed and pest suppression, and crop yields, on the farm he owns and operates with his wife Shirl, son Marc and daughter-in-law Crystal. Hershey Farms is a 500-acre crop and livestock farm in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, PA. The operation includes organic certified broiler chickens, a swine wean-to-finish facility, a crop management service, and the Harvest View Barn Wedding venue. Crops include corn, wheat, and soybeans; all managed in a no-till/cover crop environment, maintaining living cover all year-round.

Hershey has been planting directly into living green cover (known as planting green) for more than 7 years and has seen a significant improvement in the soil's ability to handle drought and excessive wet conditions. He has been cover crop interseeding for 6 years and now markets interseeders commercially. As President of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance, he frequently speaks to farmers and agribusiness across Pennsylvania and surrounding states, promoting no-till, cover crops and soil health.

Ryan Maher will talk about integrating winter-hardy cover crops, using reduced tillage, and the right tools to reduce inputs and improve vegetable production. He has worked as a specialist in the Small Farms Program at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, since 2013. He manages research and extension projects in vegetable cropping systems to support farmers at any scale in adopting reduced tillage practices to improve soil health on their farm.

After graduating from SUNY-ESF in 2003, Maher spent two years training on small-scale, diversified vegetable farms. He spent five years with the USDA-ARS in St. Paul, MN, coordinating research on nutrient cycling in perennial forage crops. He graduated from Iowa State in 2017 with an MS in Sustainable Agriculture, investigating soil processes in native grassland restorations.

Visit [www.empirefarmdays.com](http://www.empirefarmdays.com) and Facebook for details on the Soil Health Center farmer panels, daily luncheon sponsored by King's AgriSeeds, and the daily cover crop field demo tour sponsored by King's AgriSeeds and Seedway.

The Soil Health Center is a popular learning stop for visitors to Empire Farm Days. The 2019 agricultural trade show and rural living event will be held August 6-8, 2019, at Rodman Lott and Son Farms in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

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