

Winter cover crops meant to protect soil may contribute to climate change

Farmers grow crops or leave dying vegetation in their fields over the winter. A [new study](#) from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado, shows they may be causing unintended climate warming.

“When they stick out above the snow, they can warm winter temperatures,” Danica Lombardozzi, a plant ecophysiolgologist with NCAR, said.

Lombardozzi headed this new study that showed warming caused by crop cover absorbing high amounts of sunlight. She used computer modeling to find that fields with crop cover showed significantly warmer winter temperatures than fields with no cover or just short stubble.

“On average, that increased air temperature by 5.5 degrees Fahrenheit or 3 degrees Celsius. A significant temperature rise,” Lombardozzi said.

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This is new research so the applications for this data are limited, but this localized warming could change anything from precipitation in the area, to increasing the melting time for snow cover in the fields.

Read full, original article: [Winter crops may cause unintended warming, study says](#)