The Process of Crop Rotation for Strawberry Production in Santa Cruz County

OUTLINE
1. Crop rotation review
2. Process for deciding whether or not to rotate: 5 steps
3. Process for choosing the rotation crop(s): Cover or cash?
Crop rotation review

• ‘A good rotation crop results in higher yield and/or quality in the following strawberry crop by reducing diseases, insects and/or weeds, and/or improving soil health (fertility and/or structure).’
Process for deciding whether or not to rotate

- Decision Tree: The underlined option moves you closer to choosing crop rotation.
- Step One. Point of View: (a) Economic (Cost:benefit) or (b) Philosophic
- Step Two. Production system: (a) fumigation or (b) non-fumigation or organic

- Step Three. Verticillium: (a) Land with vert: either quit strawberries completely or plant with brussel sprouts/broccoli, chop finely, let set, and incorporate or (b) Land without vert

- Step Four. Ground quality: (a) Weak (perennial weeds, compaction, tapped out fertility, reduced organic matter, eroded) or strong ground quality

- Step Five. Marketing and value of rotation crop: (a) Poor marketing prospects or (b) Good marketing prospects. Have financing, a market advantage with existing resources, and a profit projection.
1. Cover crops

- (a) Strawberry grower or (b) Grower of strawberries + other cash crops can fit in a cover crop rotation without leaving the land idle. Choose the cover crop variety based on the benefits desired. There is not good cover crop planting date for exclusively strawberry growers.
2. Cash crops

(a) Land is good (big, square, flat, drained, loamy and coastal) or (b) has one or more deficiencies.

Good land provides the most options. Can grow all the cool season vegetables, possibly partnering with a Grower/Shipper/Packer. But high rents increase risks.

Remember your goal:

• Not to lose more than the value of the post-rotational yield bonus. Post-rotational yield bonus = 20% = $850/acre net (3.5% of gross costs). Lower in non-organic.