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There’s a potentially game-changing healthcare movement coming from America’s heartland.

Thanks to the National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health held in Omaha Feb. 18-19, more attention is being given to the importance of soil health.

This event was sponsored in part by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Obviously, the Buffett family is known for making sound investment decisions, and Howard G. and his son Howard W. Buffett—who both operate farms—want farmers to think about the investments they make in the health of their soil.

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation has been working closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other partners to educate people about the benefits of soil health. The health of our soil has broad implications regarding the vitality of our farms, the health of our planet and our ability to feed more than 9 billion people who will be coming to dinner by the year 2050.

This movement continues to grow thanks to a different kind of healthcare—the health and care of our precious soil.

Talk to any farmer working to improve the health of the soil and he or she will likely tell you that the “ah-ha” moment came upon the realization that soil isn’t just an inert growing medium. In fact, the soil is alive and teeming with trillions of microorganisms and fungi that are the foundation of an elegant, symbiotic ecosystem.

This new reality has quietly spawned an agricultural revolution. Increasingly, more and more producers in Nebraska and throughout the nation are harvesting a wide range of production, environmental, sustainability and business benefits—on and off the farm—by improving soil health.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service recently launched a new education and awareness campaign titled “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil” to help more farmers and ranchers discover the basics and benefits of soil health—and to encourage the adoption of soil health-improving practices like cover cropping, no-till and diverse crop rotations.

We realize the journey to improving soil health has its challenges. Every farm is different and has its own set of unique resource issues. Fortunately, our nation’s farmers are innovative, courageous and tenacious. NRCS is committed to assist these soil health pioneers—and to help make their farms more productive, resilient and profitable along the way.

As we face mounting production, climate and sustainability challenges, we believe there is no better time to make a long-term commitment to improve the health of our living and life-giving soil.

The promise of our future depends on it.