



Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up

Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land. CRP participants plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

FSA administers CRP, while other USDA agencies and partners provide technical support. More detailed information on CRP is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program."

CRP Continuous Sign-up

Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time under continuous sign-up. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding. Continuous sign-up contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.

To offer land for continuous sign-up, producers should contact their

local FSA office. To find your local office, visit FSA's Web site at: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=fsa>

Contract Effective Date

For continuous sign-up, the effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to 6 months.

If the acreage is currently under CRP contract and is within one year of the scheduled expiration date, the effective date is October 1 following the expiration date.

Eligible Producers

To be eligible for CRP continuous sign-up enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new

owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

Eligible Land

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is enrolled in the Water Bank Program or suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.

Eligible Practices

Also, the land must be eligible and suitable for any of the following conservation practices:

- Riparian buffers;
- Wildlife habitat buffers;
- Wetland buffers;
- Filter strips;
- Wetland restoration;
- Grass waterways;
- Shelterbelts;
- Living snow fences;
- Contour grass strips;
- Salt tolerant vegetation; and
- Shallow water areas for wildlife.

Fact Sheet

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Land within an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-designated public wellhead area may also be eligible for enrollment on a continuous basis.

CRP Continuous Sign-up Payments

FSA provides CRP continuous sign-up participants with rental payments, including any incentives, and cost-share assistance:

■ **Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent or cash rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

The per-acre annual rental rate may not exceed FSA's maximum payment amount and is calculated in advance of enrollment. While continuous sign-up acceptance is not determined by a competitive offer process, producers may elect to receive an amount less than the maximum payment rate.

■ **Cost-share Assistance**

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be no more than 50 percent of the participant's cost to establish approved practices.

■ **Financial Incentives**

As a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the soil rental rate for field windbreaks, grass waterways, filter strips, and riparian buffers. An additional 10 percent may be added to the soil rental rate for land located within EPA-designated wellhead protection areas. A per-acre payment rate may also be added for maintenance of eligible practices.

■ **Additional Financial Incentives**

Also as a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers participants the following payment enhancements:

- An up front signing incentive payment (CRP-SIP) up to \$100 per acre for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time SIP will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met; and

- A practice incentive payment (CRP-PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time PIP will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

For More Information

For more information on CRP continuous sign-up, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crp.htm>

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