

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)



Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill). The 2018 Farm Bill was extended by the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024 (Pub. L. 118-22). The program is also governed by regulations published in 7 CFR, part 1410. The program is implemented by FSA on behalf of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Program Administration

FSA administers CRP while technical support functions are provided by: USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); State forestry agencies; Local soil and water conservation districts and; non-federal technical service providers.

Benefits

CRP protects more than 20 million acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. CRP is also a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.

General CRP Enrollment

Producers have the opportunity to offer land for general CRP enrollment annually during announced enrollment periods. Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acres;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion and;
- Cost.

Further information on general CRP signup is available in the FSA fact sheet "**Conservation Reserve Program General Signup.**"

Continuous CRP Enrollment

Under continuous CRP enrollment, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time. Certain eligibility requirements still apply, but offers are not subject to competitive bidding. Further information on continuous CRP enrollments is available in the FSA fact sheet "**Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment.**"

Grasslands Enrollment

Grasslands CRP helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. Further information on Grassland CRP enrollments is available in the FSA fact sheet "**Conservation Reserve Program Grassland.**"

For More Info

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For details, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.



Who is Eligible?

A producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer for continuous or 12 months before the close of general or grassland signup, 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

Both continuous CRP and general CRP require cropland, land to be planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity for four of six crop years from 2012 to 2017, and be physically and legally capable of being planted (no planting restrictions due to an easement or other legally binding instrument) in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

For general signup, land also must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher;
- Be enrolled in a CRP contract that expires Sept. 30 or;
- Be located in a national or state conservation CRP priority area. Marginal pasture land may also be eligible for continuous signup.

Grasslands CRP has alternative requirements for eligible land.

Payments

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, as well as certain incentive payments and costshare assistance.

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 cash rent using data provided by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The soil rental rates are subject to an 85 percent proration for general signup and a 90 percent proration for continuous signup. 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. CRP grasslands rates are based on 75 percent of the NASS pasture rate.