



Conservation Reserve Program, 49th General Enrollment Period Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016

OVERVIEW

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will conduct a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general enrollment period from Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016.

CRP is a federally-funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for 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. Accepted contracts for the 49th CRP enrollment period will begin Oct. 1, 2016.

In its 30th year, CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill). 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.**"

SUBMITTING CRP OFFERS

Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP may be offered for enrollment during the 49th CRP general enrollment period. In addition, CRP participants with contracts expiring on Sept. 30, 2016, may submit offers.

To submit CRP offers, producers must visit their local FSA office. FSA will accept offers only during the enrollment period. To find a local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

ELIGIBLE PRODUCERS

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to the end of this CRP enrollment period, 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 circumstance of the acquisition presents 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 the CRP general enrollment period, land must be cropland (including field margins) that is planted, or considered planted, to an agricultural commodity four of the six crop years from 2008 to 2013, 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. Alfalfa or other multiyear grasses and legumes grown in a rotation not to exceed 12 years may be eligible for the 49th CRP enrollment period.

ADDITIONAL CROPLAND REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the eligible land requirements for the CRP general enrollment period, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acres or;
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

CRP PAYMENTS

FSA provides those applicants who are selected for the 49th CRP general enrollment with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments and cost-share assistance.

- **Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent. County office staff working with the producer will calculate the maximum CRP rental rate for each offer prior to enrollment. Producers may offer land below the rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

- **Cost-Share Assistance**

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance cannot exceed 50 percent of the participant's costs to establish approved practices.

RANKING CRP OFFERS

FSA will rank offers for the 49th CRP general enrollment period according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data (primarily based on location, soils information and selected conservation practice) and determines the environmental indices for the land offered.

FSA ranks each eligible offer in comparison to all other offers and selects from that ranking. After the enrollment period ends, the Secretary of Agriculture will decide where to make the EBI cutoff. Those who have met previous EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this enrollment period. Producers may consult with local FSA and Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) staff on how to maximize EBI points and increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

More information on EBI for the 49th CRP enrollment period is available by reading the FSA

fact sheet, “**Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment 49, Environmental Benefits Index.**”

CRP CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

In addition to the 49th CRP general enrollment period, producers at any time can participate in CRP continuous enrollment period, in which producers can enroll the most environmentally sensitive land. More information on CRP continuous enrollment is available in the FSA fact sheet, “**Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-Up**” located at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2015/crp_continuous_sign_up_november_2015.pdf.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is for informational purposes; other restrictions may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information on CRP, visit FSA's website at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp or contact your local FSA office. To find the nearest FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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