



**Fact Sheet**

**16th Sign-Up Period  
October 14 - November 14, 1997**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource-conserving covers on eligible land. The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land and provides cost-share assistance in an amount equal to not more than 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved practices. The duration of contracts is from 10 to 15 years.

Sign-up 16 of the CRP will be held for a 5-week period between October 14 and November 14, 1997. This is the second CRP general sign-up since Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 amendments to the Food Security Act of 1985.

**Eligibility**

To be eligible to be placed in CRP, land must be:

(1) Cropland that has been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 2 of the 5 most recent crop years which is also physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or

(2) Marginal pasture land that is either:

(a) Certain acreage enrolled in the Water Bank Program; or

(b) Suitable for use as a riparian buffer to be planted to trees.

In addition to basic eligibility requirements, the cropland must also meet at least one of the following conditions. Land must:

(1) Be considered highly erodible land according to the conservation compliance provision or, if a portion of a field, have a weighted average Erosion Index of 8 or higher;

(2) Be considered a cropped wetland;

(3) Be subject to scour erosion;

(4) Be located in a national or State CRP conservation priority area; or,

(5) Be cropland associated with non-cropped wetlands.

**Ranking Criteria**

Under Sign-up 16, the CCC will continue to evaluate and rank all eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) based on the environmental benefits that would potentially accrue if the land were enrolled in the CRP.

This ensures that only the most environmentally sensitive lands are selected.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service collects data for each of the EBI factors based upon the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Offers are then ranked in comparison to all other offers, and selections made from that ranking.

EBI factors are:

- Wildlife habitat cover benefits;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching;
- On-farm benefits of reduced erosion;
- Enduring benefits;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion;
- Benefits of enrollment in conservation priority areas where enrollment would contribute to the improvement of identified adverse water quality, wildlife habitat, or air quality; and
- Cost.

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### **Changes to the EBI**

Several changes were made in the EBI since Sign-up 15 in the spring.

- The wildlife habitat cover benefits factor was revised to recognize the improved wildlife benefits attributable to certain covers. (Wildlife species, both game and nongame, benefit most from vegetation planted specifically to address their habitat needs.)
- The air quality factor was changed to more accurately reflect wind speed, moisture conditions, particle size, organic material, volcanic and organic soils, and proximity to designated agricultural areas that contribute to the nonattainment of air quality standards or effect Class 1 pristine air quality areas such as National parks.
- An additional subfactor was added to the cost factor to further encourage the CRP's cost competitiveness.
- Other minor changes were made for clarity and to facilitate administration of the EBI.

### **Payment Rates**

Except under special circumstances, CRP payment will be based on the same rates as those used in Sign-up 15. Maximum CRP payments will be determined on county average dryland cash or cash rent equivalent rental rates adjusted for site-specific, soil-based productivity factors. CRP payments can include an additional amount, not to exceed \$5 an acre a year, as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.

### **Producer Eligibility Requirements**

An applicant must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the sign-up period *unless*:

- The new owner acquired the land as a result of death of the previous owner;
  - The only 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 the Commodity Credit Corporation that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

Producers should contact their local FSA Service Center for more information.

### **When and Where**

The sign-up period begins Tuesday, October 14, 1997, and runs through Friday, November 14, 1997.

Applications are accepted only during that period at the local offices of the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). These are usually listed in local telephone directories under "United States Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

### **What will the EBI cutoff be for the 16th Sign-up ?**

**Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after Sign-up 16 is concluded. CRP is a highly competitive program. Landowners who have met previous EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this sign-up.**

**NOTE: The sign-up period does not apply to participation in certain high-priority environmental practices such as filter strips, riparian buffers, etc. (For more details, see FSA Farm Program Fact Sheet: Conservation Reserve Program - Continuous Sign-Up for High-Priority Practices.)**

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