

USDA Farm Service Agency  
Conservation Reserve Program  
**Questions and Answers on General CRP Sign-up**  
February 13, 2020

**1. Is there a minimum number of EBI points needed in order for an offer to be accepted?**

There is not a minimum number per se. This is because the EBI cut off will drive the points needed. And we won't know what that score, or cut off point, will be until after sign-up is over.

**2. Can a producer/landowner, work with the Farm Service Agency staff in the office to understand some of the instruments and the points of the offer?**

Sure they can they can work with their local FSA county office to help them to see what the different point values are. The three things that a producer can do to affect their EBI score is: adjust their rental payment, choose different cover mixes, and/or choose some enhancement opportunities.

Offering below the maximum payment rate is always an area that can get you some additional EBI points. And your local county office can help you to understand that EBI a little bit better.

**3. Does the cropping history requirement include marginal pastureland?**

It does not apply to marginal pastureland. Both cropland and marginal pastureland that are eligible for CRP.

**4. How long does it take to get an answer about an offer being accepted?**

There is no specific amount of time that it will take to determine the EBI cutoff by USDA. This process has been in the past anywhere from just a couple of weeks to a month or longer. But once USDA announces the EBI cutoff, FSA can determine how many offers they can accept, and there will be a national news release announcing there have been a certain number of offers received, and of the offers received a certain amount of offers have been accepted into the CRP general sign-up.

After that announcement, producers that have submitted an offer will be mailed a letter. The letter will either say their offer has been accepted, and they need to contact their county office to notify us if they wish to proceed. Or their letter will tell them their offer has been rejected and will note why their offer was rejected. Their letter may suggest other CRP opportunities. For example, their letter may suggest the producer to submit an offer under continuous sign up if they want to do buffers or wetlands or CRP grasslands.

**5. For producers that do get their offer accepted into the CRP general program, when do their contracts began?**

On October 1, 2020.

**6. What are other ways that a producer can keep aware of the announcement for EBI cut-off scores and number of CRP general offers received and accepted?**

GovDelivery is a good way for producers to get national and local county announcements.

They can go to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFSA/subscriber/new/> to sign up for emails or text message alerts for news on the CRP program.

**7. What if a landowner decides to sell their land within that 10 year contract that they've signed with FSA?**

Participants may sell land that is under a CRP contract. The producer that purchases the land then will have an option to continue that CRP contract or not.

If the new owner decides that they want to succeed, and continue the CRP contract FSA will complete a contract revision to remove the previous owner and add the new owner to the contract. The contract will then continue with the new owner. If that new owner decides they do not want to succeed to that contract, the contract is terminated and the previous owner must refund all annual rental payments and cost share payments for all the years that they were in the CRP contract.

**8. Are there any special programs for beginning farmers and ranchers for producers in their first or second year of farming?**

Yes, we have the transition incentive program or TIP, which is set up for beginning farmers and ranchers. TIP is when a CRP contract holder can transition their contracts, in the year that it's expiring, or the year before their contract expires, to a beginning farmer or rancher.

The CRP participant then will get two additional annual rental payments after they transition that land.

**9. Where can producers find additional resources for new and beginning farmers and ranchers?**

The <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/> website is a website that has a lot of information on conservation programs that USDA has. It contains special incentives for limited resource producers beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, tribal producers, as well as military veteran producers.

**10. What are the outreach plans and goals for Socially Disadvantage (SD) farmers and ranchers in FSA? Will there be any funding attached to programs?**

Every State has an outreach plan that aligns with the national outreach goal to conduct activities to strengthen land stewardship and transitions through conservation and energy programs. State conduct various activities throughout the year with local organizations in which they talk about the CRP programs.

CRP SHIPP has provisions for beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers. They are paid at a higher rental rate and they are eligible to receive cost share for planting the cover. However, SHIPP is only applicable to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

**11. How do you expect to raise the number of acres with the drastic reduction in payments. In our area I see a reduction from \$33 to projected payment of \$10.**

The 2018 farm bill reduces CRP rental rates to no more than 85 percent of the county rental rate for CRP general sign-up and no more than 90 percent of the county rental rate for CRP continuous sign-up. This is designed to better align CRP rental rates with market-based rates and should improve the availability of farmland for farmers and ranchers. (source: <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/conservation-reserve-program-in-the-2018-farm-bill>)

**12. We have land where we planted trees. And we continue this practice. Our CRP expired prior to 2017, but we have not have an opportunity to sign up for another CRP. What are options?**

Land planted to trees that was in a CRP contract that expired is no longer considered cropland. It is not eligible for CRP if the land is not cropland or marginal pastureland. Visit with your local FSA County office to determine the current land eligibility.

**13. Does the cropping history requirement apply to forestland?**

Forestland is not eligible for CRP. Only land that is cropland or marginal pastureland is eligible for CRP. Forestland is not considered cropland or marginal pastureland.

**14. What is the difference between CRP and CREP?**

There are two major differences between general CRP and CREP.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) targets specific State or nationally significant conservation concerns and is a negotiated agreement between the USDA and State, Indian Tribes or non-governmental organizations that utilizes federal and non-federal funds to address environmental concerns. CREP is offered under continuous signup criteria so if the land meets all eligibility criteria, the offer is automatically accepted. General CRP signup is offered annually, during a specific period of time, to owners and operators of land that want to offer land for enrollment in the CRP. General signup offers are ranked using an Environmental Benefits Index against all other offers nationwide. Once signup is over an EBI cutoff score is selected which is then used to determine what offers are accepted.

CREP enrollment began on December 9, 2019 and is ongoing; while signup for general CRP is annually with open and end dates, this year ending on February 28, 2020.

**15. It was said at the beginning of the seminar that contracts that expired in 17, 18, and 19 have the chance to re-enroll. If there was a signup with their practice available before now, can they still re-enroll. I had heard that if they had an opportunity and did not re-enroll during that sign up, that they could not now.**

If the contract CRP contract expired in 2017, 2018, or 2019, and there was an opportunity in that year to re-enroll, the land is not eligible to enroll in 2020 under the expired land criteria. Visit your local FSA office to determine if the land meets other CRP signup enrollment criteria.

**16. What is considered marginal pastureland?**

Marginal pastureland is a determination made by the FSA County Committee. Marginal pastureland is not cropland or forestland.

**17. What is the future of the CRP program?**

Statutory authority for CRP is through FY2023 with an acreage limitation of 27 million acres.