



Fact Sheet

April 2006

Conservation Reserve Program General Sign-up 33 March 27 to April 28, 2006

Overview

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up from March 27 to April 28, 2006.

CRP is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to control soil erosion, improve water and air quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 to 15 years.

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 CRP sign-up 33. In addition, CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2006, may submit offers.

To submit CRP offers, producers must visit their local FSA office. FSA will accept offers only during the sign-up period (March 27 to April 28, 2006). To find your local

FSA office, visit USDA's Web site at: <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 the CRP sign-up 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 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 four of the six 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 land devoted to hardwood trees that was under CRP contract which expired on September 30, 2001, or earlier.

Additional Cropland Requirements

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of 8 or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

CRP Payments

FSA provides CRP sign-up 33 participants 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 or cash-rent equivalent. FSA calculates the maximum CRP rental rate for each offer prior to enrollment. Producers may

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offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that FSA will accept their offer.

■ **Maintenance Incentive Payments**

CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.

■ **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 CRP sign-up 33 according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data for each of the EBI factors based on environmental indices for the land offered.

FSA ranks each eligible offer in comparison to all other offers and selects from that ranking. After the sign-up ends, FSA will decide where to make the EBI cutoff. Those who have met previous sign-up EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this sign-up. Producers may consult with local USDA experts on how to maximize EBI points and increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

More information on EBI for CRP sign-up 33 is available in the FSA fact sheet, "Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up 33, Environmental Benefits Index."

CRP Continuous Sign-up

In addition to CRP sign-up 33, producers can participate in CRP continuous sign-up, in which producers can enroll the most environmentally sensitive land at any time.

More information on CRP continuous sign-up is available in the FSA fact sheet "Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up."

For More Information

For more information on CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov

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