



## Farm Service Agency

# Conservation Reserve Program

**FACT SHEET**  
December 2019

## Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that 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 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 assistance providers.

## Benefits

CRP protects more than 20 millions of 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; helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams; and is a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.



USDA photo

## General Enrollment

Under general enrollment, producers have the opportunity to offer land for CRP general 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 CRP general signup is available in the FSA fact sheet "**Conservation Reserve Program General Signup.**"



## Continuous Enrollment

Under CRP continuous 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 CRP continuous enrollments is available in the FSA fact sheet “**Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment.**”

## Grasslands Enrollment

CRP Grasslands 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 CRP Grassland enrollments is available in the FSA fact sheet “**Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands.**”

## 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 grasslands 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

For cropland, land must be planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity for four of six crop years from 2012 to 2017, and that is 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 CRP conservation priority area.

Marginal pasture land may also be eligible for continuous signup.

CRP Grasslands has alternative requirements for eligible land.

## Payments

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, as well as certain incentive payments and cost-share 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.

## More Information

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](http://farmers.gov/service-locator).