

Key Points

September 2002

Conservation Security Program

*The following includes comments from **Mark Rey**, Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, and **Bruce I. Knight**, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service, from a June 3, 2002, press conference, Washington, D.C.*

- The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill).
- “CSP is complementary with the other programs, not competitive. CSP fills the last component of our portfolio on working lands.”—**Bruce Knight**
- CSP is open to producers who have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and additionally provides incentives for those who want to do more.
- CSP will be available in Fiscal Year 2003. In the meantime, NRCS will be developing the rules and regulations.
- “The Conservation Security Program, as the largest new program in the conservation title, is the one that we’re going to reach out as broadly as possible to solicit views from as wide a range of interests as possible as we move forward.”—**Mark Rey**
- “Innovative things will be out there in the future with a program like CSP, even the work like carbon sequestration really is complementary to what happens when you have good conservation practices going on the ground, whether that be CRP, EQIP, Managed Grazing Systems.”—**Bruce Knight**
- There will be collaborative efforts associated with CSP. During the rulemaking process, NRCS will seek ideas on how to increase the participation of State and local governments and other groups in collaborative approaches, such as those used in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and other conservation programs.
- CSP provides a payment and technical assistance for addressing resource concerns on agricultural working land.
- Examples of resource concerns are water quantity, water quality, soil erosion, soil quality, air quality, animal management, and plant suitability.
- Resources must be protected to a level that solves the problem so that the resources are sustained as described in the quality criteria level referred to in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.
- The quality criteria establish the minimum treatment level necessary to adequately address the resource concerns identified.
- CSP is available to owners and operators of agricultural operations, including Tribes, beginning in fiscal year 2003.

- CSP is a voluntary program. A continuous sign-up will be available for owners and operators to apply for the program.
- Applicants are interviewed to determine resource concerns and establish the current level of conservation treatment being applied on eligible agricultural lands.
- CSP payments include a base amount that varies depending on the inclusion of all or part of the agricultural operation and the level of conservation treatment being applied. The CSP payment will provide payments for practice maintenance, cost-share payments for practice installation, and enhanced payments. Cost-share will not be available for animal waste management structures.
- Private agricultural land and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian Tribe, including cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture land, rangeland, and forested land that is an incidental part of the agricultural operation, are eligible for enrollment in CSP.
- If a producer desires to move to a higher level of conservation treatment, cost-share payments for needed practices are available through the CSP up to 75 percent of the cost of the new practice, or 90 percent in the case of beginning farmers or ranchers. All needed practices and management must be in place before a producer can move to the next payment level.
- Land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and land converted to cropland after the enactment of the CSP legislation is not eligible for the program.
- Eligible practices include land management and vegetative and structural practices that protect the resources, except animal waste management related structures.
- CSP has three levels of conservation treatment. Tier I level of treatment addresses at least one natural resource concern on part of the agricultural operation. Tier II level of treatment goes a step further; it must treat one natural resource concern and involve the entire agricultural operation. Tier III is the highest level of conservation management; it must treat all natural resource concerns and must involve the entire agricultural operation.
- Tier I contracts are limited to five years. Tier II and III contracts range from five to ten years, as determined by the producer. Contracts may be renewed, if agreeable to the participant and NRCS.
- Percentages of national average rental rates for the 2001 crop year will be used to determine base payment. County average costs for the 2001 crop year will be used to determine conservation practice installation and maintenance payments. The Secretary of Agriculture may opt to use other appropriate rates for the 2001 crop year that would ensure regional equity.
- Payments will not be made for the purpose of maintaining practices required for conservation compliance or where maintenance agreements already exist.
- At the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture, enhanced payments may be added for such things as applying practices that exceed the minimum requirements for the tier, participating in research and

demonstration projects, cooperating with other producers to implement watershed or regional resource conservation plans that cover at least 75 percent of the targeted area, or carrying out assessments and evaluations relating to practices included in a conservation security contract.

- More information about CSP will become available as the program rules are developed.

For More Information

If you need more information about CSP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>



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<http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>

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