

### The Systems Effect

Farming systems that use a combination of conservation practices to protect natural resources (soil, water, air, plant, and animal) promote long-term, sustainable use, and they help move your farm forward on the Cropland Conservation Continuum. These systems can save you time and money. Your tillage, irrigation, and runoff management decisions can protect your land and result in *healthy soil to produce high quality and yielding crops*.

As part of a conservation tillage system, reduced soil disturbance, crop residues, and cover crops protect soil from erosion. Organic matter from residue and cover crops builds soil structure and, along with contour farming, increases water infiltration into the soil to reduce runoff. Improved soil conditions and low pressure application of irrigation water (to mimic natural rainfall) result in increased water movement into the soil and reduced irrigation inputs. *Better* and *Best* soil and water management, along with recommended rate and timing of nutrient application leads to higher yielding crops, increased crop residues for continued soil protection, improved nutrient cycling in the soil, and a variety of other positive results, all of which improve the foundation of your farming operation... *Your Soil*.

### Farm Bill Programs Can Help

The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers use conservation practices and systems on cropland. Contact your local office for assistance and information about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

East NTSC - September 2009

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# Continuum

## Management Options for Cropland

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)  
[soils.usda.gov/sqi](http://soils.usda.gov/sqi)

# Cropland Conservation Continuum

Take your farm to  
Better → Best

*Follow each management sequence for options that move your farm forward on the Cropland Conservation Continuum.  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service staff provide technical assistance to help you use management systems that solve common resource problems.*

## Conservation Tillage

clean tillage → no-till / strip-till → no-till & cover crops

## Irrigation

irrigation erosion → low pressure drops → variable rates

## Runoff Management

soil erosion → contour farming → grassed waterway

## Wildlife Habitat

habitat loss → conservation buffer → field border