FPP02 - On-Farm Pilot Project

Enhancement Description
On-Farm Pilots showcase conservation activities that have proven environmental benefits, but have not been widely adopted in the local farm community. Participants select and agree to install, monitor and promote conservation activities (practices, components or management techniques) that have been identified by the NRCS State Conservationist as addressing specific resource needs.

Land Use Applicability
Each approved pilot project will have a land use designated, e.g. Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland and/or Forest land.

Benefits
Conservation activities can show promise in research but until they are proven in actual field use farmers may be reluctant to adopt them. Pilot projects will provide a mechanism to prove that a new conservation activity is viable in the project area. Publicizing the implementation of the conservation activity can help other farmers learn about new conservation techniques by observing their peers.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement applies to all crop, pasture, range or forest land use acres.

Criteria
- Producers will select from a pre-approved list of pilot projects (if available).
- Pilots include practices, components, or management techniques that have shown environmental benefits but have not been adopted by farmers in the project area.
- The pilots must be implemented and monitored according protocols developed specifically for the project.
- Protocols include:
  - Specifics of the practice, component or management technique being piloted
  - Acreage required to adequately conduct the pilot
  - How many years the pilot is to be conducted
  - What the participant is required to provide (materials, labor, maintenance etc.)
  - Type(s) of publicized events that will be used (field days, signage, winter meetings, etc.) to meet the minimum number of three (3) events. This activity will be schedule once per year that an educational event takes place.

- Data on the costs and performance must be collected for the demonstration project as specified for each individual pilot project. The data collection needs are available in a separate document.

Adoption Requirements
This enhancement is considered adopted when the pre-approved pilot project has been implemented and monitored according protocols developed specifically for the project and events to publicize the project have been held.

Documentation Requirements
- Documentation of the events held to publicize the project.
- Data collected for the project will include as directed by the individual states:
    - Practice cost, field operations conducted, etc.
    - Frequency of collection
    - Data collection forms

North Dakota Requirements
The acceptable project areas of focus include: Sage grouse and pollinator habitat.

Conservation Stewardship Program
On-Farm Pilot Project
Requirements

Overview

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) encourages participants to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities. This enhancement is eligible for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland. CSP enhancements means a type of activity installed and adopted to treat natural resources and improve conservation performance. Many of the CSP enhancements are related to existing NRCS conservation practice standards, but at a management intensity level that exceeds minimum practice standards.

On-Farm Pilots showcase conservation activities that have proven environmental benefits, but have not been widely adopted in the local farm community. Participants select and agree to install, monitor and promote conservation activities (practices, components or management techniques) that have been identified by the NRCS State Conservationist as addressing specific resource needs. Using field days, signage and/or other innovative publicity methods, conservation activities that have shown promise in research plots can be promoted on a larger scale, thus removing farmers' reluctance to adopt them. Participants in On-Farm Pilots learn about new conservation activities first hand, becoming advocates for how these new conservation techniques can be applied. On-Farm Pilots are not intended to pay for the cost of setting up or administering a pilot. CSP applicants that choose this activity will be awarded conservation performance points that increase their ranking score and payment level for participation in the program.

Pilot Project Requirements

Each year NRCS will identify broad national technology focus areas for which new and innovative conservation activities are needed. States will select specific pilot projects to emphasize and will develop a list of acceptable projects, guidelines for implementation and publicity requirements. This should be done in consultation with the State Technical Committee. Conservation partners are encouraged to help promote and organize On-Farm Pilots, but the activity is not intended to provide any financial assistance for doing so. Individual or groups of farmers are also encouraged to submit project proposal following the criteria listed below. Ideas for On-Farm Pilots should be submitted to the State Conservationist along with supporting documentation as to how the idea relates to a focus area and selected conservation activities (practices, components and/or management techniques).

Criteria for On-Farm Pilot Conservation Activities (Practices, Components and/or Management Techniques)

- Practices, components or management techniques:
  - Should have been demonstrated to provide environmental benefits either through research or practical field experience
  - Should not have been widely adopted in a given geographic area
  - Could be an activity that has been proven in another state or geographic area within the state and shows promise in addressing the resource needs in the targeted area
  - Address one of the State identified focus areas:
    - Air
    - Animal
    - Energy
    - Plant
    - Soil Erosion
    - Soil Quality
    - Water Quality
    - Water Quantity
- States will develop a pilot project protocol that includes:
  - Specifics of the practice, component or management technique being piloted
  - Acreage required to adequately conduct the pilot
  - How many years the pilot is to be conducted
  - What the participant is required to provide (materials, labor, maintenance etc.)
  - Type(s) of publicized events that will be used (field days, signage, winter meetings, etc.) to meet the minimum number of three (3) events. This activity will be schedule once per year that an educational event takes place.
  - This information can be presented to interested participants as a fact sheet that outlines their involvement.
- States will develop data collection criteria that includes:
  - Type of data collected (practice cost, field operations, etc.)
  - Frequency of collection
  - Data collection forms