

Conservation Choices

Your guide to 30 conservation and environmental farming practices

U.S. Department of Agriculture



About this guide

This guide features 30 different conservation and environmental farming practices. It explains how each practice works and how it helps improve a farm, lists items to think about when considering each practice, gives some information on NRCS technical standards, and talks about maintenance needs.

Each practice will work most effectively in combination with others as part of a total resource management system.

Five symbols are used throughout the book to show the benefits of each practice featured in the guide. Explanations of the symbols are listed below.

Benefit symbols



This practice helps reduce soil erosion and sediment runoff, or may add organic matter to the soil



Help protect or improve water quality with this practice.



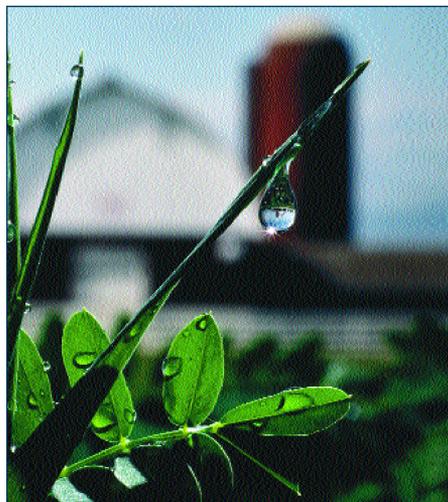
Use this practice to increase profits by reducing costs, increasing production or both.



You're thinking of wildlife by providing habitat or food sources with this practice.



This practice helps improve air quality by reducing odor and other problems.



Contact your local NRCS office for detailed information concerning your land.

About total resource

The key to a successful total resource management system is careful, complete planning.

Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, each practice fits together with others to complete a picture. But anybody who has spent a rainy Sunday afternoon piecing together a jigsaw puzzle knows it takes patience, organization and teamwork.

When designing a total resource management plan you need to consider all the resources on your farm. Take an inventory; think about every field, pasture, pond, stream, and wooded area. Then consider which soil conservation, water quality, wildlife habitat and energy conservation practices would contribute to an environmentally and economically sound farm.

Some of the most profitable practices, like pest or nutrient management take little or no financial investment and may have the highest impact on water quality.



management

For example, scouting crops, selecting pest control alternatives and targeting control in problem areas can cut expenses and improve water quality.

The planning process may seem overwhelming, but that is where teamwork can help.

There are federal, state and local agencies available to help you plan,

implement and maintain your total resource management system. You might also consider using a private crop consultant.

Make use of the technical experts to choose sound environmental, conservation and profitable practices for your farm.

Total resource management checklist: some basic questions

- What are the natural resources on my farm?
- What are the crops to be grown?
- Have I minimized runoff?
- Am I using crop rotations to reduce disease and pest problems?
- What type of wildlife would I like on my farm?
- Does any practice interfere with or cancel out another practice?
- Can I use wetlands or filter strips to filter nutrients from runoff water?
- Am I making the best use of animal manure as nutrients for plants?

Conservation Choices

The practices numbered below contribute to a well-rounded conservation and environmental farm. This photo shows many of the options available.

Use this booklet to identify the practices you might add to your farm. Then review each practice to see whether it could work with other practices to better protect your soil and water.



30 conservation and environmental choices

- 1 Woodland management
- 2 Planned grazing system
- 3 Manure storage
- 4 Farm pond
- 5 Wildlife upland habitat
- 6 Wildlife food plot
- 7 Filter strip
- 8 Grade control structure
- 9 Critical area planting
- 10 Contour stripcropping
- 11 Diversion
- 12 Grassed waterway
- 13 Contour buffer strip
- 14 Contour farming
- 15 Field border
- 16 Well protection
- 17 Windbreak
- 18 Pasture planting
- 19 Stream protection
- 20 Maure testing
- 21 Tree planting
- 22 Conservation tillage
- 23 Wetland enhancement
- 24 Crop rotation
- 25 Nutrient management
- 26 Wetland
- 27 Pest management
- 28 Water and sediment control basin
- 29 Terrace
- 30 Cover crop