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Virginia Bulletin: 440-8-1

October 10, 2007

Subject: PGM – Use of EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheet in FY08

Purpose: To distribute instructions and guidance on the use of management practices 328, Conservation Crop Rotation; 329 Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip-Till and 595 Pest Management in the FY08 EQIP Program.

Action Required: IMMEDIATE

Expiration Date: September 30, 2008.

Explanation: This process will take effect immediately upon receipt of this bulletin.

Contact: Questions on these procedures should be directed to Chris Lawrence, State Agronomist, Tel. 804-287-1680 or chris.lawrence@va.usda.gov.

/s/

JOHN A. BRICKER
State Conservationist

Attachment

DIST:
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Use of EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheet in FY2008

Purpose and Scope

- (a) Crop rotations and tillage methods are essential planning components in working with producers to address soil erosion, soil quality, and water quality resource concerns.
- (b) Crop rotations and conservation tillage methods should be planned in accordance with the applicable conservation practice standards found in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) as Conservation Crop Rotation (328); Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip-Till (329); and Pest Management (595).
- (c) The criteria listed below apply to use of the above practices and associated payments in the FY2008 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) in Virginia, with the exception that the criteria below ***do not apply*** to Pest Management (595) payments for tree fruit IPM or for control of brush, noxious weeds, or invasive species. The criteria below are applicable to Pest Management (595) payments for crop diversity.
- (d) All types of 328, 329, and 595 payments may be combined in the same EQIP contract. However, total value for all 328, 329, and 595 crop diversity payments may not exceed ***\$20,000 per year / \$60,000 per contract*** per FY08 EQIP contract recipient.
- (e) Exhibit 4 lists the EQIP-specific Toolkit Narratives and Protracts Cost List Component Codes to be used in conjunction with all FY08 328, 329, and 595 crop diversity payments. Select only one narrative per practice code.
- (f) The 328 payment for rotation to perennials may ***not*** be combined on the same field with any other 328, 329, or 595 crop diversity payments.
- (g) The subset of payments listed below are associated primarily (but not exclusively) with cropping systems involving annual crops. The criteria listed in (1) to (12) below apply only to this subset of payments.
 - 328: Soil Organic Matter Building (based on SCI score) and Continuous No-Fallow (CNF)
 - 329: Continuous No-Till/Strip-Till
 - 595: Crop Diversity (based on species counts)
 - (1) Any and all payments in this subset of payments (328 SCI & CNF; 329; 595 crop diversity) can be combined on the same field.
 - (2) Minimum eligibility criteria for all payments in this subset is a planned “after condition” Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) score of +0.25 or greater and a soil loss of “T” or less.
 - (3) The procedures and worksheets in attached Exhibits 1 through 3 shall be used to determine and document EQIP incentive payment rates for this subset of practices.
 - (4) Participants must commit to an implementation period of three years. The same implementation period is required for all 328 SCI & CNF, 329, and 595 diversity practices planned on the same field.
 - (5) The participant must complete the planned crop rotation at least once during the implementation period. Therefore, planned crop rotations longer than three years are not eligible.
 - (6) Three annual incentive payments shall be made in all cases.

- (7) Payments may begin when the planned cropping system is initiated. The planned cropping system is considered to be “initiated” when at least one of the management changes differentiating the new EQIP-funded cropping system from the previous cropping system has been implemented.
- (8) EQIP payments for continuous no-till (329) may not be made on land receiving state BMP cost-share for continuous no-till adoption.
- (9) EQIP payments for continuous no-till (329) may be made on any land where continuous no-till/strip-till has not yet been adopted, even if the producer has adopted the practice previously on other land.
- (10) Completed Cropping System Description & Evaluation (D&E) Specification Sheets are required documentation. See Virginia Technical Note, Agronomy – Crops & Crop Management #1, *Cropping System Spec Sheets*.
 - D&E Spec Sheets shall be used to document and analyze both the current cropping system and the “after condition” cropping system.
 - Completed D&E Spec Sheets shall be used to complete the EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheet (Exhibit 2). Relevant D&E Spec Sheets shall be attached to completed EQIP 328/329/595 Worksheets.
 - Completed D&E Spec Sheets shall be included in the Conservation Plan and shall serve to document planned rotations and tillage methods that the participant has agreed to implement under the EQIP contract.
- (11) Completed copies of the EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheet (Exhibit 2) and Payment Calculator (Exhibit 3) must be included in the case file to support the Conservation Plan and EQIP Contract.
- (12) Copies of all documentation should be provided to the producer.

EXHIBIT 1: STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE FOR COMPLETING EQIP 328/329/595 WORKSHEET

Step 1: Conservation Planning on Cropland

Emphasize the slogan: “Go Beyond T, Manage for C.” This is key because 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems EQIP payments are only available for systems predicted to increase soil organic matter. Promote the following practices:

- Continuous no-till/strip-till (329)
- Continuous no-fallow rotations - grow something all year every year (328)
- High diversity rotations - at least three total species, at least one nitrogen-fixing legume species (328 and 595)
- Any combination of practices that improves soil organic matter trend - less tillage, more biomass, less erosion.

Step 2: Analyze “Before” and “After” Conditions Using Cropping System D&E Spec Sheets

Obtain the following document: Virginia Technical Note, Agronomy – Crops & Crop Management #1, *Cropping System Spec Sheets* (available from EFOTG as well as VA NRCS Cropland Agronomy website at http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/CropAgronomy/crop_agronomy.html).

Use the Cropping System Description & Evaluation (D&E) Specification Sheets found in the Tech Note to document and analyze your client’s current (“before”) cropping system and improved (“after”) cropping system.

If your client is seeking EQIP payments for more than one crop rotation and/or Conservation Management Unit (CMU), multiple pairs of “before” and “after” D&E Spec Sheets may be required.

Step 3: Complete EQIP 328/329/595 Worksheet (Exhibit 2) and Payment Calculator (Exhibit 3)

Fill out the EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheet (Exhibit 2), following the instructions embedded therein. Complete one Worksheet for every pair of “before” and “after” D&E Spec Sheets. Attach relevant D&E Spec Sheets to the Worksheet.

As you proceed through the 328/329/595 Worksheet, you will be referred to the EQIP 328/329/595 Payment Calculator (Exhibit 3). Fill out the Payment Calculator, following the instructions embedded therein.

The completed EQIP 328/329/595 Worksheet and EQIP 328/329/595 Payment Calculator are required documents for the case file.

Step 4: Include Cropping System Spec Sheets in Final Conservation Plan

The Cropping System D&E Spec Sheet for the “after” EQIP-funded cropping system must be included in the final Conservation Plan. This Spec Sheet will serve to document planned rotations and tillage methods that the farmer has agreed to implement under the EQIP contract.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED SHEETS ARE AVAILABLE

For examples of completed Cropping System D&E Spec Sheets, EQIP 328/329/595 Annual Cropping Systems Worksheets, and EQIP 328/329/595 Payment Calculators for a number of typical scenarios, see the following website:

http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/CropAgronomy/328_329.html

EXHIBIT 2: EQIP 328/329/595 ANNUAL CROPPING SYSTEMS WORKSHEET

Part I: Client and Field Info

Prepared by: _____ Service Center: _____ Date: _____

Client: _____ EQIP Contract #: _____

Tract(s) and Field(s) covered under this worksheet: _____ Acres: _____

Total implementation acres:	

Part II: Cropping System Info

“Before” cropping system name: _____ “Before” rotation duration (yrs): _____

“After” cropping system name: _____ “After” rotation duration (yrs): _____

Are D&E Spec Sheets for both the “before” and “after” cropping systems attached to this EQIP Worksheet? _____

Part III: Payment Rates and Totals – For This Worksheet *ONLY*

<i>Data</i>		<i>How to get data</i>
a. Implementation period:	3 years	
b. 328 pay rate (\$/ac/yr):	\$	<i>Complete the EQIP 328/329/595 Payment Calculator (Exhibit 3) to determine this value. Range: \$0 to \$70.</i>
c. 329 pay rate (\$/ac/yr):	\$	<i>See Exhibit 3. Rate is either \$0 or \$25.</i>
d. 595 crop diversity pay rate (\$/ac/yr)	\$	<i>See Exhibit 3. Range: \$0 to \$45.</i>
e. 328+329+595 pay rate (\$/ac/yr):	\$	<i>Add III.b. + III.c. + III.d..</i>
f. Total implementation acres:		<i>From Part I, above.</i>
g. Total value of 328+329+595 EQIP payments for all acres in this worksheet:	\$	<i>Multiply III.a. x III.e. x III.f.</i>

NOTE: Total value of 328+329+595 crop diversity payments per FY2008 EQIP contract recipient must not exceed \$20,000 per year / \$60,000 per contract.

Part IV: Narratives & Cost List Component Codes for Entry in Toolkit & Protracts

a. Go to Exhibit 4, select one narrative per practice code, then fill in the blanks below using info from Exhibit 4:

Practice Code	Narrative Code	Payment Rate (\$/ac/yr)
328 (Crop Rotation)	_____	\$
329 (No-Till/Strip-Till)	_____	\$
595 (Pest Management)	_____	\$
	<i>Combined rate (328+329+595):</i>	\$

b. Verify that the pay rates based on narratives selected in Exhibit 4 match the rates in III.a. thru e. above.

EXHIBIT 3: EQIP 328/329/595 PAYMENT CALCULATOR

Instructions:

1. Enter RUSLE2 output for “before” and “after” cropping systems. Does the “after” cropping system meet minimum eligibility test?
2. Evaluate the “before” system. Which practice elements are already being implemented? Enter an “X” in Row 1 for each practice element already being implemented. The information you need is on the Cropping System D&E Spec Sheet.
3. Evaluate the “after” or EQIP-funded system. Which practice elements will be implemented? Enter an “X” in Row 2 for each practice element that will be implemented. The information you need is on the Cropping System D&E Spec Sheet.
4. Complete Rows 3 through 7 following instructions in table.
5. Note: multiple payments can be made for multi-level improvements in SOM building and crop diversity. For example, changing from a “before” cropping system with 0.00 SCI to an “after” system with +0.75 SCI is eligible for three payments – one for each level of SOM performance achieved (minimum, intermediate, and optimum).

Cropping System		RUSLE2 Output		Eligibility test (yes for both to proceed)		Conservation Practice “Elements” Eligible for EQIP Incentive Payments								
						Conservation Crop Rotation Elements (328)				No-Till Elements (329)	Pest Management Elements (595)			
						Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building Cropping System			Continuous No-Fallow Crop Rotation	Continuous No-Till / Strip-Till System	High Diversity Crop Rotation			
						Minimum (+0.25 SCI)	Intermediate (+0.50 SCI)	Optimum (+0.75 SCI)			Minimum (3 & 1)	Intermediate (5 & 2)	Optimum (7 & 3)	
1	Before	Soil Loss	SCI	Soil loss to T?	SCI at least +0.25?									
2	After													
3	<i>For each practice element, has the change from “before” to “after” produced improvement? If yes, enter an “X” in this row.</i>													
4	<i>Payment rates for practice elements (\$/ac/yr):</i>					\$15	\$15	\$15	\$25	\$25	\$15	\$15	\$15	
5	<i>Is there an “X” in Row 3? If yes, enter payment rate for each practice element (\$/ac/yr):</i>					\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	
6	<i>Total payment rate for each practice (\$/ac/yr):</i>					\$			\$	\$				

**EXHIBIT 4: EQUIP-SPECIFIC TOOLKIT NARRATIVES & PROTRACTS COST LIST
COMPONENT CODES FOR USE WITH ALL FY08 328, 329 & 595 CROP DIVERSITY PAYMENTS**

SELECT ONLY ONE NARRATIVE PER PRACTICE CODE!

Practice Code	Narrative Code	Narrative Text	Payment Rate (\$/ac/yr)
328	E001	Adopt a new cropping system that eliminates all fallow periods and qualifies as CONTINUOUS NO-FALLOW . New system must also qualify as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (soil loss to T and SCI +0.25 or greater).	\$25
	E010	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) qualifies as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (T and SCI +0.25 or greater); and (2) results in a ONE-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition.	\$15
	E011	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) eliminates all fallow periods and qualifies as CONTINUOUS NO-FALLOW ; and (2) results in a ONE-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition.	\$40
	E020	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) qualifies as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (T and SCI +0.25 or greater); and (2) results in a TWO-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition. The new system SOM performance level may be Intermediate (+0.50 or more) or Optimum (+0.75 or more).	\$30
	E021	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) eliminates all fallow periods and qualifies as CONTINUOUS NO-FALLOW ; and (2) results in a TWO-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition. The new system SOM performance level may be Intermediate (+0.50 or more) or Optimum (+0.75 or more).	\$55
	E030	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) qualifies as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (T and SCI +0.25 or greater); and (2) results in a THREE-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition. The new system SOM performance level must be Optimum (+0.75 or more).	\$45
	E031	Adopt a new cropping system that (1) eliminates all fallow periods and qualifies as CONTINUOUS NO-FALLOW ; and (2) results in a THREE-LEVEL improvement in SCI-based SOM performance level compared to the “before” condition. The new system SOM performance level must be Optimum (+0.75 or more).	\$70
	E040	Adopt a new crop rotation by establishing a PERENNIAL crop in a field that has been in annual crops for five years or more. Perennial must be maintained for at least three summers and must achieve 90% cover within one year after establishment. Not intended for permanent cropland conversion.	\$100
329	E001	Adopt a new cropping system that eliminates all full-width tillage and qualifies as CONTINUOUS NO-TILL . New system must also qualify as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (soil loss to T and SCI +0.25 or greater).	\$25
595	E001	Adopt a cropping system with increased crop diversity. The change must result in a ONE-LEVEL improvement in diversity performance level compared to the “before” condition, with levels defined as: Minimum (at least 3 species, at least 1 legume); Intermediate (at least 5 species, at least 2 legumes); Optimum (at least 7 species, at least 3 legumes). Practice must complement a cropping system that qualifies as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (soil loss to T and SCI +0.25 or greater).	\$15
	E002	Adopt a cropping system with increased crop diversity. The change must result in a TWO-LEVEL improvement in crop diversity performance level compared to the “before” condition, with levels defined as: Minimum (at least 3 species, at least 1 legume); Intermediate (at least 5 species, at least 2 legumes); Optimum (at least 7 species, at least 3 legumes). The new system diversity level may be Intermediate or Optimum. Practice must complement a cropping system that qualifies as Soil Organic Matter (SOM) Building (soil loss to T and SCI +0.25 or greater).	\$30
	E003	Adopt a cropping system with increased crop diversity to assist in controlling weeds, soil-borne pathogens, and other pests. The change must result in a THREE-LEVEL improvement in crop diversity performance level compared to the “before” condition, with levels defined as: Minimum (at least 3 species, at least 1 legume); Intermediate (at least 5 species, at least 2 legumes); Optimum (at least 7 species, at least 3 legumes). The new system diversity level must be Optimum. Practice must complement a cropping system that qualifies as Soil Organic Matter Building (soil loss to T and SCI +0.25 or greater).	\$45