

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

September 8, 2010

NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT MANUAL (NFSAM)
180 - CPA
Circular No. 6, Part 527

SUBJECT: CPA – Definition of Unique Certification Standards for Technical Service Provider Certification

Purpose. To inform State Conservationists and Directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Island Areas of changes in national Technical Service Provider certification guidelines mandated in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) and to define the “unique” certification standards that may be added at State level.

Effective Date. This Circular is effective upon receipt.

Background. The 2008 Farm Bill requires the Secretary of Agriculture to provide national criteria for the certification of third party Technical Service Providers and to approve any unique certification requirements proposed at the State level. In addressing specifics related to certification of Technical Service Providers, Section 1242, (e) (3) states:

“(3) EXPERTISE.—In promulgating such regulations, the Secretary, to the maximum extent practicable, shall—

“(A) ensure that persons with expertise in the technical aspects of conservation planning, watershed planning, and environmental engineering, including commercial entities, nonprofit entities, State or local governments or agencies, and other Federal agencies, are eligible to become approved providers of the technical assistance;

“(B) provide national criteria for the certification of third party providers; and

“(C) approve any unique certification standards established at the State level.

Policy. While TSP certification has always been national in perspective, some States have added specific additional certification criteria as determined by the State Conservationist. These additional certification criteria led to inconsistencies in national certification. Under the 2008 Farm Bill, any unique certification standards established at the State level must be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, who delegates that authority to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Effective immediately, NRCS limits unique certification criteria to requirements established by State law.

Only State law requirements may be added to the national Technical Service Provider certification criteria established in TechReg.

Contact. Questions should be directed to the Technical Service Provider Team Leader at (202) 720-6731 or by e-mail at angel.figueroa@wdc.usda.gov.

/s/

CRAIG R. DERICKSON
Deputy Chief
Financial Assistance and Community Development