

# United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service



# Delaware

ENERGY MANAGEMENT (CSP Enhancements)  
Delaware Enhancement Activity Job Sheet E-4

January 2005

Name:

Use Perennial Legumes to reduce energy need to produce nitrogen  
Use of Annual Legumes to reduce energy needed to produce nitrogen.

Payment = \$.70 per acre for perennial and \$.10 per acre for annual.

## Use of Perennial Legumes to Supply Crop Nutrient Needs

Legumes (or other green manures) are excellent fertilizer for the soil, providing such nutrients as nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, micronutrients, potassium, and organic matter. Using alternative fertilizers to inorganic compounds will benefit the soil's water-holding capacity and tilth. Additionally, this approach can reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and minerals used in the production of inorganic fertilizer, conserving energy in the process. However, when using these alternative sources, it is still essential to follow good management practices in order to avoid damage to the crop and hazards to the environment.

**Legumes and Green Leaf Manures** – Legumes and green leaf manures can perform a multitude of functions on the farm. Nutrients absorbed by green manure crops or those retained within crop residues after harvest, are gradually released or "mineralized" when the crop is incorporated into the soil and subsequently decompose. Many factors govern when the nutrients will be released, including the carbon/nitrogen ratio, moisture content, particle size of the soil, method of incorporation, soil nitrogen levels, and temperature. Legumes and green manures, like animal-based manure, can reduce the consumption of fossil fuels as inputs needed to produce inorganic fertilizers.

Legumes are the most important of the green manures. There are several categories of legumes and green manures that are used in conservation farming.

**Cover crops** – Cover crops form a mulch that protects the soil from wind and water erosion and greatly reduce annual weeds in the next growing season. Examples of annual legumes include red and sweet clover, hairy vetch, winter cereals, and buckwheat.

**Catch crops / nutrient conserving Crops** – A catch crop only grows briefly and is either worked in after the main crop has been harvested or planted between two main crops. The catch crop protects the soil from erosion and minimizes

nutrient loss from the soil through leaching. It can also enrich the soil by adding organic matter, nitrogen, or other nutrients. Examples of annual legumes used as catch crops are oilradish, red clover, and buckwheat.

**Smother crops** – A smother crop is a green manure crop grown primarily to control weeds. It is characterized by extremely dense, vigorous, and rapid growth. Smother crop species usually are selected with specific weeds in mind. For example, in some regions, fall rye is used against quack grass because its vigorous growth in spring coincides with the growth cycle of quack grass. Documentation Required: Farmer or crop consultant certification of appropriate fertilizer applications.

**Documentation Required:** Use the following Table for documentation and attach a plan map showing the location of the enhancement practices implemented.

Tract & Field #s	Enhancement practice	Acres

**Certification**

I certify that I have installed/performed the enhancements in field(s) listed in the Table above.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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