

Conservation Security Program

Frequently Asked Questions

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

1. **How often over the past 5-10 years does the applicant need to take soil samples?**

A current soil test is one that is no more than 5 years old.

2. **Does the soil sample need to come from specific fields?**

Yes. A representative soil sample is required from each field. Refer to the National Planning Procedures Handbook for the definition Conservation Management Unit. Soil sampling intensity will be based on Pacific Northwest Land Grant University guidance (PNW 570-E, 2003). See <http://eesc.oregonstate.edu>.

3. **If an applicant has multiple fields or FSA farm numbers and took soil samples from different fields each year, does that qualify for samples?**

Yes. As long as the samples are by field, no more than 5 years old and meet Pacific Northwest Land Grant University guidance (PNW 570-E, 2003). See <http://eesc.oregonstate.edu>

4. **Some farmers use the neighbor's soil samples to get fertilizer rates. Does this qualify for CSP?**

No. See 2 above.

5. **The question in the self-assessment asks, "Are you applying nutrients based on a soil test and realistic yields?" Do you need to answer yes to both?**

Yes. The producer will need to show in their records that they have been practicing nutrient management using soil tests and realistic yields to adjust the amount, placement and timing of nutrients 2 out of the last 3 years.

6. **Does a producer need to have been keeping a journal of yield and fertilizer rates over the past 5-10 years?**

The minimum documentation requirements are found in each self-assessment and records workbook by land use. As a minimum, records will be available for at least 2 of the past 3 years for nutrient applications and pest management activities. There needs to be a current soil test on record to justify the rate of nutrient applications. If manure is applied, a current nutrient test must also be on record.

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7. **Are Federal Crop Insurance yield records acceptable for the yield requirements for CSP?**

No. Neither the "T Yields" nor farm yields are specific to soils and fields.

8. **Are tractor notes acceptable for fertilizer and pesticide records?**

See 6 above.

9. **Will a producer need to keep a journal of yields, soil samples and fertilizer rates throughout years of the CSP contract?**

Yes. If the producer is practicing nutrient management they are already doing this.

10. **Does completing the workbook meet the yield documentation requirement?**

Yes. The documented yields entered by the applicant in the self assessment records workbook are sufficient; however, when new crops are added to the crop rotation, yield goals must be based on the NRCS practice standard 590.

11. **Does the applicant need to provide copies of soil tests, plant tissue tests, and/or manure tests results?**

Yes, if applicable, they shall be attached to the appropriate self-assessment records workbook prior to applicant interview.

PASTURELAND

1. **What is a “grazing plan”?**

The glossary of terms defines a grazing plan as, managing the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing animals, including:

- Selecting kinds of domestic animals suited to the terrain, climate and other existing grazing area conditions.
- Optimizing grazing distribution through placement of watering facilities, fences or herding techniques.
- Identifying periods of grazing, rest and other treatments for each management unit.
- Identifying and maintaining adequate cover on sensitive areas (riparian, wetland, and other habitats of concern.)
- Not negatively impacting cultural resources or sensitive species.
- Identifying and monitoring key areas and key plants to evaluate grazing management decisions.

2. **Can this be where a pasture unit is used X months then the livestock are moved to a different pasture every year or, does it entail dissecting units of ground into multiple paddocks and moving livestock on regular intervals such as daily, weekly or monthly?**

See 1 above.

3. **What is Pastured Cropland?**

As defined in the glossary of terms Pastured Cropland is a land cover/use category, either irrigated or non-irrigated, that includes areas used for the production of pasture in grass-based livestock production systems that could support adapted crops for harvest, including but not limited to land in row crops or close grown crops, forage crops that are in a rotation with row or close grown crops. A pasture field may be considered as Pastured Cropland if the capability class of the predominate map-unit is 1 through 4, either irrigated or non-irrigated (refer to soil survey). The irrigated capability class may be used only if the field in question has been actively irrigated for the past 3 years. Pastured cropland will be evaluated for enrollment categories using pasture condition scoring.

PEST MANAGEMENT

1. **What does this questions mean, “Have you assessed the environmental risk of pesticide use and addressed any risks with appropriate measures?”**

NRCS uses a soil and pesticide specific screening tool to evaluate the risks of pesticide runoff and/or leaching. If this has not been done in the past for the producer, it will need to be completed prior to answering the question in the self-assessment. If after completing the screening tool for each pesticide used, and there are high risk potentials for runoff and/or leaching, then these have to be mitigated to a lower risk level before the producer is eligible for CSP.

2. **Does reading the pesticide label and not exceeding label maximums make me eligible for CSP?**

Not necessarily. Most of the time this may be true, however, there may be specific site characteristics that may require special mitigation to reduce runoff and/or leaching.

3. **Can any pesticide that is registered for use be used when following the label?**

Yes. As long as the producer addresses any high risks from the screening tool.

4. **How do long residual chemicals like Tordon and some Sulfonylurea Products come into play?**

The pesticide screening tool uses a soils data base and pesticide data base that recognizes key features affecting pesticide movement and longevity (i.e. – half life, toxicity, permeability, clay content.)

RESIDUE MANAGEMENT

1. **What is a high residue crop?**

The glossary of terms defines high residue crops as crops that produce and leave high levels (more than 3,000 pounds per acre) of biomass in the field after harvest. High residue crops can include cover, small grains, hay and other crops expected to produce adequate crop residue for soil improvement and protection from erosion. The crop aftermath is left to protect the soil.

2. **Spring barley stubble and straw can disappear even under direct seeding when chemical fallow is used prior to a fall crop. Does this qualify?**

Crop rotations, yields, tillage practices and intensity and erosion rates will be used to determine a soil conditioning Index Value. If the value is .0 or greater the producer would qualify.

3. **Canola stubble can be quite thick in the fall and winter following a crop but can be gone by the time a fall crop is direct seeded. Again, does this qualify?**

See 2 above.

TILLAGE AND BURNING

1. **Are there any cultivation practices that a producer cannot do and still be involved in CSP?**

Crop rotations, yields, tillage practices and intensity and erosion rates will be used to determine a soil conditioning Index Value. If the value is .0 or greater the producer would qualify.

2. **Can a producer plow and still be in CSP?**

See 1 above.

3. **When there is an excess of residue, this trash problem requires heavy tillage to incorporate or breakdown. Can heavy tillage be used?**

See 1 above.

4. **Can a producer burn?**

See 1 above.

5. **Spot burning is needed sometimes to clean up high residue areas so that there is good seed to soil contact. Will spot burning be allowed in this or other situations?**

See 1 above. The Soil Conditioning Index will be run using the dominant features in the field.

6. **Wind blown debris can be a problem on farms. Will spot burns be allowed for this?**

See 1 and 5 above.

AGRICULTURE OPERATIONS AND CONTROL

1. What is an agricultural operation?

An agricultural operation includes all privately owned agricultural land, whether contiguous or non-contiguous, under the control of the participant and constituting a cohesive management unit, that is operated with equipment, labor, accounting system and management that is substantially separate from any other. The minimum size of an agricultural operation is a field.

It is the applicant's responsibility to define their agricultural operation. NRCS staff shall inform the applicant of the statutory and policy requirement for delineating an agricultural operation, however; NRCS staff shall not coach the applicant on the delineation of the agricultural operation.

An applicant may only have 1 active CSP contract at any given time.

The agricultural operation shall include all lands that the applicant:

1. Owns and or operates, and
2. Has control of for life of CSP contract and
3. Shares a risks in crop/livestock production

2. What are the time limits of a contract and what if the lease ends during the contract period?

Contracts are from five to ten years on the fiscal year calendar.

An applicant must show in writing control of the land for the life of the contract. If the lease ends during the contract, this land will not be eligible because the applicant does not have control of the land for the life of the contract.

3. Many producers have year-to-year leases or have hand-shake leases will they be eligible?

No. See above.

4. Does it matter that the producer has a lease that gives the tenant first right of refusal to renew a lease, so they could renew the lease if they wish?

No. See question 2.

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5. Does 51% of a farm land area in the watershed boundaries qualify?

Yes. A majority of the land area within the watershed would qualify the entire agricultural operation. For example if an applicant had control of land in 3 different watersheds the watershed that contained the largest percentage of land in its boundary would be the qualifying watershed.

EXAMPLES of AGRICULTURE OPERATIONS AND CONTROL

All examples make the assumption that the majority of the agricultural operation is located in a selected watershed and that the applicant qualifies for CSP.

1. Applicant A owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland and 2500 of rangeland. The same equipment and labor are used to perform management activities on both land uses. Crop aftermath grazing is used on the cropland to facilitate the livestock grazing operation.
 - Applicant A's agricultural operation would include all 3500 acres.
2. Applicant B owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland and 2500 of rangeland. There is no intermingled use and separate equipment and labor are used to perform management activities.
 - Applicant B's agricultural operation would include the entire 3500 acres.
3. Applicant C owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland and leases 2500 of rangeland from owner A, who shares a risk in the livestock operation. There is no intermingled use but the same equipment and labor are used to perform management activities.
 1. Applicant C's agricultural operation would include all 3500 acres.
4. Applicant D owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland, operates 500 acres of leased cropland and 1500 acres of rangeland. Owner of leased acres does not share a risk in the operation. Applicant D has control of the leased acres for the duration of the contract. The same equipment and labor are used to conduct management activities on both land uses.
 - Applicant D's agricultural operation would include all 3000 acres.
 - Owner of leased acres **is not** an eligible applicant for CSP.

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5. Applicant E owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland operates 500 leased acres (with control for duration of contract) and 1500 acres of rangeland. The owner A of the leased acres shares a risk in the operation. The same equipment and labor are used to conduct management activities on both land uses.
 - Applicant E's agricultural operation would include all 3000 acres.
6. Applicant F owns 120 acres of Pastureland and 15 acres of Farmstead. This is a dairy operation where the pastureland is used for forage production and application of dairy waste. The farmstead is used for collection and storage of dairy waste
 - Applicant F's agricultural operation would include the 120 acres of Pastureland for a Tier 2 contract.
 - If Applicant F wanted a Tier 3 contract then the agricultural operation would include all 135 acres.
7. Applicant F own 120 acres of Pastureland and 15 acres of Farmstead. This is a dairy operation where the pastureland is used for forage production. The farmstead is used for collection and storage of dairy waste, however waste is applied offsite.
 - Applicant F's agricultural operation would include the 120 acres of Pastureland for a Tier 2 contract.
 - If Applicant F wanted a Tier 3 contract then the agricultural operation would include all 135 acres.
8. Applicant G owns/operates 160 acres of irrigated cropland and annually cash leases 160 acres from Owner A and leases 160 acres from Owner B through a crop share agreement for the duration of the CSP contract.
 - The land owned by Owner A **is not eligible** for CSP since Owner A is not sharing a risk and Applicant G does not have control of the land for the duration of the contract.
 - Applicant G's agricultural operation would include all the land except the land owned by Owner A.
9. Applicant H owns and operates 200 acres of dry cropland, 1500 acres of rangeland and 40 acres of orchards. The dry cropland and rangeland acres are managed with the same labor and equipment, however, the orchards acres are managed with different labor and equipment.
 - Applicant H's agricultural operation would include the entire acreage.
10. Applicant I owns and operates 1500 acres of cropland, which includes 350 acres of land enrolled in CRP. The land enrolled in CRP will expire during the CSP Contract.
 - Applicant I's agricultural operation would include the entire 1500 acres; however Applicant I **would not** receive a CSP payment on the CRP ground until the CRP contract expires.

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11. Applicant's J, K and L shares a risk in 2 or more agricultural operations such as Corporation A and Corporation B.
 - The applicants need to identify the applicant for each of the corporations.
12. Applicant K owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland. 400 acres are located in Watershed A, 300 Acres are located in Watershed B and 300 acres are located in Watershed C. Watershed A is a funded watershed.
 - Applicant K **would be** an eligible applicant and Applicant K's agricultural operation would include all 1000 acres.
13. Applicant L owns and operates 1000 acres of cropland. 300 acres are located in Watershed A, 400 Acres are located in Watershed B and 300 acres are located in Watershed C. Watershed A is a funded watershed.
 - Applicant L is **not eligible** for CSP until Watershed B is funded.
14. John Wilson and his spouse Irene, jointly own and operate 1000 acres. The land is farmed with the same labor and equipment but each has a separate bank account.
 - This is one agricultural operation and therefore only one contract.
15. An applicant has the following scenario:
 - ✓ Four dry cropland fields – three range pastures.
 - ✓ Cropland field 1.-The applicant owns and operates this unit.
 - ✓ Cropland field 2.-The applicant operates and sharecrops but does not have control of all of the management decisions.
 - ✓ Cropland field 3.-Same as field two but the applicant does have control over the management decisions.
 - ✓ Cropland field 4.-The applicant cash leases this unit but does not have control of the management decisions.
 - ✓ Range pasture 1.-The applicant owns and operates
 - ✓ Range pasture 2.-The applicant cash leases (Public Land) and does not have control over management decisions.
 - ✓ Range pasture 3.-The applicant annually cash lease and can not insure control of land through the life of the contract and does not have control of the management decisions.
 - Cropland fields 1 and 3 and Range pasture 1 are the only lands eligible for CSP.
 - The applicant's agricultural operation would include Cropland fields 1 and 3 and Range pasture 1.

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16. The applicant owns 5 fields under a center pivot system and they are managed under a five year rotation. The applicant cash leases out a different field each year for specialty crop production.
- If the applicant does not have control of the management decisions for those fields that are leased out then the land **is not eligible** for CSP.
 - If the applicant has it written into the annual lease that the lessee will follow the applicant's conservation plan and that the tier and category placement will be maintained or improved then the applicant's agricultural operation would include all 5 fields.

17. This scenario is a family corporation called M&N Farms and:
- Field 1 is owned by the corporation
 - Field 2 is owned by son number 1
 - Field 3 is owned by son number 2
 - Field 4 is owned by daughter and son-in-law
 - Field 5 is owned by wife

This is one agricultural operation and that would include all fields.

If one or more members do not want to be a participant then this corporation would only be allowed to have a Tier1 contract.

18. Producer A owns 1,000 acres of eligible private agricultural land and also leases 3,000 acres of state and federal land. Producer A has control over the state and federal land. Producer A **must include the 3,000 acres of state and federal land** into their agricultural operation and are responsible for those acres meeting all appropriate program eligibility, as applicable, even though those acres themselves are not eligible to receive a payment.

In this same example, if producer A does not have control over the 3,000 acres of state and federal land, those acres **will not** be part of the agricultural operation.

19. A Native American Indian tribe wants to enroll 4,000 acres into CSP. The tribe owns these acres and has control of these acres. The tribe is eligible to be the **applicant** and apply for these acres in CSP. Keep in mind the contractual limits and the fact that each producer with a specific operator ID can only have one CSP contract.

In this same example, if the 4,000 acres are in a trust in which individual producers are in control of the acres, that individual producer will be the **applicant** and the tribe can only participate as a **participant**.