

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Cropland



Conservation Choices

Modern farming practices have allowed American farmers to become among the most productive in the world. Modern advances, along with tried and tested practices, allow farmers to maintain or improve productivity with less impact on our natural resources.

Conservation practices like cover crops, that have been in use for generations still have an important role. More recent practices like conservation tillage reduce soil erosion and improve soil quality. New tools and variations of already proven conservation practices are continuously being added to the conservation tool box. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial assistance so that farmers can evaluate these practices on their own operations.

Cropland Resource Concerns

The primary purpose of EQIP is to reduce the impact of agriculture on our shared natural resources including water, soil, air and wildlife.

Water quality is of particular concern in Michigan since most of our streams and rivers empty into the Great Lakes. There are a large number of practices proven to reduce runoff from crop fields. Some of these practices include filter strips, cover crops, conservation tillage, grassed waterways and drainage water management.

Practices such as cover crops and filter strips benefit wildlife by providing valuable habitat. Windbreaks and nutrient management also have a positive effect on air quality.



Cover crops help keep soil in place and prevent nutrients and sediment from entering ground water.



Soil Quality

Practices like cover crops, conservation tillage and conservation crop rotations improve the soil quality on your farm. Over time, these practices will increase the amount of organic matter and improve biological diversity in the soil. Increased organic matter allows soil to absorb more water making crops more resistant to drought.

EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides conservation financial assistance for working lands. Rather than take land out of production, EQIP helps farmers maintain or improve production while conserving natural resources.

EQIP assistance is available for all types of agricultural operations, including field crops, specialty crops, organic, confined livestock and grazing, and private non-industrial forest land.

Growing a variety of plants over the entire growing season also supports biodiversity in the soil. Organisms like earthworms, fungi, bacteria and nematodes improve soil structure and cycle nutrients such as ammonium.

Economic Benefits

Many conservation practices reduce input costs as well as conserving natural resources. Conservation tillage reduces the number of passes over a field reducing fuel and equipment costs.

Conservation practices can also reduce the amount of fertilizers that need to be applied. A nutrient management plan helps producers determine what amount of nutrients are needed each year. Improved soil biology can also reduce the amount of nutrients that need to be applied. Precision application of fertilizers will assure that fertilizers are only applied in the amounts needed.

A side benefit of controlling erosion is reducing the amount of silt entering county drains. Some drainage districts take soil erosion into account when determining assessments.

Eligible Cropland

EQIP assistance is provided for the first time implementation of a conservation practice. Producers may implement a practice, such as cover crops, on a portion of their fields and later apply to expand the practice to additional cropland.

Financial assistance may also be available to increase the level of conservation where a practice was already established. For example assistance is available for planting a diverse cover crop on a field where only a single species cover crop was grown before.

Common EQIP Cropland Practices in Michigan

- Cover Crops
- Nutrient Management
- Conservation Cover
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum
- Critical Area Planting
- Conservation Tillage
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Grassed Waterway
- Filter Strip

When & Where to Apply

Applications for NRCS conservation programs are accepted on a continuous basis at local fields offices. Producers who already receive email correspondence from USDA can also apply online utilizing the Conservation Client Gateway.



Michigan

Natural
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www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/

