

Forage Suitability Group Descriptions

Fact Sheet

Overview

Forage suitability group descriptions (FSGDs) are interpretive reports which provide a soil and plant science basis for conservation planning on livestock operations where forage crops are grown. FSGDs identify adapted forage species, yearly forage production estimates, and distribution of production during the growing season. Additionally, FSGDs provide information on climate patterns, soil properties, and management interpretations. Information from the forage suitability group description is utilized during the conservation planning process to select appropriate forage species for pasture and hay planting and to develop livestock forage balance reports.

Definition

Forage Suitability Groups (FSGs) are composed of a group of soils (soil map unit components) having similar potentials and limitations for forage production. Soils within a FSG are sufficiently uniform to:

- Support the same adapted forage plants under the same management conditions.
- Require similar conservation treatment and management to produce the forages selected in the quality and quantity desired.
- Have comparable potential productivity.

Importance

FSGDs provide information to assist landowners in making management decisions to :

- Select adapted species based on soil and climate conditions.
- Identify potential forage yields.
- Assist with pasture budgeting – strategic planning of grazing program around seasonal growth of forages.
- Select specific management practices to maintain productivity.

Features

The basic components of an FSGD are:

- Site characteristics including physiographic and climatic features
- A listing of the soil map unit components within the FSG
- Basic information about climate associated with the soils
- Identification of forage species and/or seeding mixtures that are adapted and will grow on those soils without corrective treatments
- Identification of other forages that could be grown after applying certain management practices to correct limiting soil features
- Growth curves of the common forage species associated with the FSG
- A listing of total yearly forage production estimates for the adapted forages
- A listing of soil limitations and severity
- A discussion of conservation practices needed to overcome the limitations
- Management recommendations

For More Information

National Range and Pasture Handbook, Chapter 3, Section 2:
<http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/publications/nrph.html>

Contact

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