

Guidelines for Seasonal High-Tunnel Systems

Seasonal High-Tunnel systems are to promote locally grown vegetable and other specialty crops. These systems offer an option to extend the growing season to successfully produce vegetable and other specialty crops. High tunnels are applicable to all farms, but may offer particular advantages to small, limited resource, and organic farmers.



There are many commercially available high tunnel structures on the market in numerous widths and lengths. The high tunnels are constructed of metal or plastic bow frames that are covered with a single layer of polyethylene. Ventilation is achieved by means of a combination of roll-up side vents, end vents, and occasionally, roof vents.

- The **maximum area allowable for cost-share is 2,178 sq. ft. (5% of 1 acre) per operation**. The area may include multiple smaller structures. For example, instead of doing one house that is 30x70, you can do two houses that are 20x50 each, four houses that are 15x35 each, and so on.
- The systems are required to be built from **pre-manufactured kits**. Homemade ones will not be cost-shared. Manufactured structures consisting of, or including, rigid panels or components are not allowable.
- The tunnel frame must be made of metal, wood, or durable plastic; and the house **must be at least 6 feet in height**. See practice standard.
- The life span of the practice will be 4 years.
- Participants will **not** be allowed to add electricity, heat, or mechanical ventilation to the structure even at their own expense.
- Crops must be grown in the natural soil profile; **containers of any type are not allowable**.
- Black mesh cover for shade or insect control can be added at the participant's expense.
- A water supply for crops grown within the structure needs to be considered, regardless of its cost-share status, due to rainfall exclusion.
- Irrigation System (Micro-irrigation 441) can be planned as a supporting practice according to the normal EQIP criteria. **The land has to have been irrigated 2 out of the last 5 years**.
- If the structure is moved, then it must still be on the contract area.
- Additional practices should be considered to address increased runoff volumes around the structure, such as cover crop, diversion, grassed waterway, etc.
- At no time during the length of the contact will the high tunnel be used for material and/or equipment storage.
- If hazardous weather is forecasted for the contract area, such as high winds, tropical storms, and hurricanes then the high tunnel plastic cover will be removed and stored to prevent damage.
- This practice is not for home gardens, but for commercial agriculture. It is also not for starting transplants – must be full season production grown in the natural soil profile.

