INDIANA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Guidance for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Small Scale Farm Enhancements

This document provides basic technical guidance for CSP enhancements that are suited for small scale farms in Indiana. This is not a comprehensive list of all enhancements that could be planned on small scale operations. Producers and planners are responsible for completing all sections in the national enhancement and Indiana supplement in a manner that meets CSP program requirements and follows NRCS procedures. This document is based on small scale management recommendations and best practices in Indiana and is meant to help inform decision making and conservation planning.

Top Enhancements for Indiana Small-Scale Farms

This list is not comprehensive

- E328M: Diversifying crop rotation with canola or sunflower to provide benefit to pollinators
- E340F: Cover crop to minimize soil compaction
- E340H: Cover crops to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles
- E420A: Establish pollinator habitat
- E484B: Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody material as mulch
- E484C: Mulching with natural materials in specialty crops for weed control
- E612D: Adding food-producing trees/shrubs to an agroforestry system

Cover crops, tarping, season extension and microirrigation

Top Enhancements for Indiana Small Scale Farms

E328M Diversifying crop rotation with canola or sunflower to provide benefit to pollinators: This enhancement improves wildlife habitat through the incorporation of a pollinator friendly crop to at least 5% of the total operation each year. A list of pollinator friendly crops is available and includes various fruits and vegetables, cover crops and flowers. Pollinator friendly crops must be allowed to bloom before harvesting. The crop rotation must consist of at least 3 crops. At least 1 year in the rotation will include sunflowers or canola as the pollinator friendly crop.

E340F Cover crop to minimize soil compaction: This enhancement improves soil quality by reducing soil compaction. A minimum of 2 cover crop species must be used including one fibrous rooted species (grass/cereal grains) and one tap root species (broadleaf). Half of the cover crop seed mix must be listed as a level 3 or 4 "soil builder" on the Midwest Cover Crops Council Cover Crop Selector Tool. The cover crop cannot be grazed. Examples: Sorghum-sudangrass and buckwheat as a summer cover crop; cereal rye and crimson clover as a winter cover crop.

E340H Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles: This enhancement reduces plant pest pressure by planting cover crops proven to effectively smother weeds. A minimum of one species that is listed as a level 3 or 4 "weed fighter" on the Midwest Cover Crops Council Cover Crop Selector Tool must be used. When selecting cover crop species, keep in mind crop rotation and pest/disease carryover and prevention. The cover crop cannot be grazed. Examples: Cereal rye and crimson clover before tomatoes/winter squash; oats before lettuce/spinach; buckwheat before fall cabbage/broccoli/kale.

E420A Establish pollinator habitat: This enhancement improves wildlife habitat by enhancing existing habitat or installing an enhanced level of pollinator habitat. Plugs or seed may be used. Habitat areas must be at least 1.3% of the selected land use; if the planned area is less than 0.25 acres, the Indiana NRCS State Biologist will assist with evaluating the site for pollinator benefit.

To use the Midwest Cover Crops Council's Cover Crop Selector Tool, visit www.midwestcover-crops.org/selector-tools/

For more information about NRCS in Indiana, visit nrcs.usda.gov/indiana or efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov.

E484B Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody material as mulch: This enhancement improves air quality by using at least 90% of all woody materials from orchards/vineyards as mulch. The mulch can be applied anywhere needed on the operation. Mulch will be applied at a minimum thickness of 2 inches. If woody material from the orchard/vineyard is infected with disease or pest, then it may disposed of in a manner to preserve crop health.

E484C Mulching with natural materials in specialty crops for weed control: This enhancement reduces plant pest pressure by applying natural mulch material to suppress weeds. Examples of natural mulch material include straw, plant-based compost, wood chips, alfalfa hay, and weed-free grass clippings. At least 4" of dry mulch and no more than 3" of green mulch. Green mulch includes fresh grass /hay and plant-based compost. If needed, apply mulches throughout the season to suppress weeds.

E612D Adding food-producing trees/shrubs to an agroforestry system: This enhancement improves plant structure and composition and wildlife habitat by adding food producing trees to existing plantings for human or wildlife consumption. Plant at least 3 species of trees and/or shrubs, using native species whenever possible. If using non-native species, choose species and varieties that are non-invasive such as varieties of apple, peach or pear. At least one of the following activities will be applied:

- Add at least 1 edible, food producing row to existing linear plantings.
- Add clusters of food-producing plants to existing plantings, so that food plants occupy at least 10% of the total area established in an agroforestry practice.
- Add food-producing plants to occupy idle areas of the operation, such as field corners adjacent to existing plantings.

Low tunnels, mulching, native plantings and microirrigation