

GUIDELINES FOR  
FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE  
UNDER THE FARMLAND PROTECTION POLICY ACT

Adopted by the  
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

March 21, 1985

**I. Definition**

Farmland of statewide importance under the Farmland Protection Policy Act is land that meets specific criteria based on the physical and chemical properties of the soils, and the climatic environment of soil occurrence. Farmland of statewide importance shall be all prime farmland as identified by the Soil Conservation Service and in addition thereto all lands generally falling into capability classes I, II, and III which meet the following criteria.

**II. Description**

This is land that is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management (irrigation and drainage), according to acceptable farming methods. In general, farmland of statewide importance has an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and a few or no rocks. It is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and either does not flood frequently or is protected from flooding. Farmland of statewide importance is land that is available for farming, but could currently be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forestland, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water.

**III. Criteria**

A. Moisture Supply

Attachment 1 divides Texas into three (3) moisture zones as follows:

Moisture Zone I

In this zone moisture is not a limiting factor for selecting farmland of statewide importance, except soils with a depth of 20 inches or less, must have a total of 4 inches or more of available water capacity.

## Moisture Zone II

Soil has a total available water capacity equal to or greater than 4 inches in the upper 40 inches of the soil profile.

## Moisture Zone III

Soil has a developed irrigation water supply that is dependable and meets minimum quality standards for irrigation water. A dependable water supply has water available for irrigating the major commonly grown crops at least 8 out of 10 years. The quality of the irrigation water can be determined by past use i.e., without apparent damage to soil or plants, or by a water sample test.

### B. Temperature

The soil temperature at a depth of 20 inches is greater than 32 degrees F., therefore, soil temperature is not a limiting factor, except when related to permeability.

### C. Slope and Erosion

1. Soil is not presently gullied or severely eroded.

2. Soil has a slope gradient equal to or less than 5 percent.

3. Attachment 2 divides the state into sectors which determine acceptable soil loss levels from wind currents for each wind erodibility group. (USDA-NRCS NASIS Database)

They are as follows:

#### Sector A

Wind erodibility is not a limiting factor in this sector.

#### Sector B

Wind erodibility is not a limiting factor in this sector.

#### Sector C

Wind erodibility groups 3,4,4L,5,6,7, and 8 qualify as farmland of statewide importance.

#### Sector D

Wind erodibility groups 3,4,4L,5,6,7, and 8 qualify as farmland of statewide importance.

#### Sector E

Wind erodibility groups 3,4,4L,5,6,7, and 8 qualify as farmland of statewide importance.

### D. Permeability

Permeability is not a limiting factor when considering land for farmland of statewide importance.

E. Flooding

1. The soil surface is flooded less often than once in two years (none, rare, or occasional) during the growing season of crops commonly grown in the county.
2. The soil surface remains flooded for less than two days (very brief) during the growing season of crops commonly grown in the county.

F. Drainage and Water Table

Any drainage or water table problem must have a feasible solution, but a water control system may not presently be installed.

G. Salinity

1. Soil with a conductivity of saturation extract less than 4mmhos/cm in all horizons within a depth of:
  - I. 18 inches, if the soil is clay, silty clay, or sandy clay.
  - II. 30 inches, if the soil is silty clay loam, sandy clay loam, silt, silty loam, loam, very fine sandy loam, fine sandy loam, sandy loam, or course sandy loam.
  - III. 40 inches, if the soil is loamy very fine sand, loamy fine sand, loamy sand, loamy course sand, very fine sand, fine sand, sand, or course sand.

OR

2. Soil does not have a natric horizon (equal to or greater than 15% exchangeable sodium).

H. Hydrogen Ion Concentration (pH)

The soil has pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep.

I. Rock Fragments

1. Less than 35% by volume of gravel (2mm to 3 inches in diameter)

OR

2. Less than 10% by volume of cobbles (3 inches to 10 inches in diameter)

OR

3. No stones (greater than 10 inches in diameter) or too few stones to interfere with tillage.