

Three-Year Conservation Tillage for Grain and Cotton

Definition/Purpose

A Three-Year Conservation Tillage Practice means any tillage and planting system in which at least sixty percent (60%) of the at-plant soil surface is covered by plant residue to improve water quality. Benefits may include reduction of soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution from dissolved and sediment-attached substances.

Policies

1. Each year of the contract requires a crop be planted with at least 60% residue.
2. To be eligible for this conservation tillage incentive, the cooperator must certify that they are not already using the conservation tillage practice for which they are applying on any land that they farm. Cooperators who have received state or federal cost share for annual conservation tillage prior to September 20, 2000 remain eligible for the Three-Year Conservation Tillage incentive.
3. The cooperator must commit to do conservation tillage (60% crop residue cover at planting on the same field or group of fields for three consecutive years). No payment for this incentive shall be made until the required 60% at plant residue for the first crop is certified by a field office representative.
4. A cover crop should be sown at harvest or should be drilled within two weeks after harvest.
5. Regardless of the crop, residue at time of planting must be at least 60%. However, a cooperator who has received the 3-year conservation tillage incentive for peanuts, sweet corn, tobacco, and vegetables may not receive the 3-year conservation tillage incentive for grain and cotton for the same land.
6. BMP soil, nitrogen, and phosphorus impacts are required on the contract. Include the planted acreage as well. Refer to the Minimum NCACSP Effects Requirements table later in this section for the correct methods of calculation.
7. Minimum life of the BMP is three (3) years.
8. Each cooperator will be limited to a \$15,000 lifetime cap for three-year conservation tillage for grain and cotton.
9. No burning of crop residue will be permitted for any of the conservation tillage incentives.
10. When determining the acreage for which payments can be made for this incentive, only the acreage actually planted shall be considered. The area occupied by farm roads, best management practices, ditches, structures, etc. shall not be included in planted acreage.
11. On occasion it may be unavoidable for the cooperator to need to access the field when the traffic will result in ruts in the field (e.g., harvest operations). With documented

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approval from field staff, the cooperator can spot disk/level ruts to smooth out the surface. The field staff will work with the cooperator to stay in compliance with his/her conservation tillage contract. If field staff determines adequate cover can be established prior to next crop being planted, a cover crop should be planted immediately. The field staff can provide a recommendation on what might be best to plant as a quick cover. Cooperators must contact their district office for assistance.

- a. Field staff needs to determine the level of need for isolated disking. If smoothing the ruts will allow for the cooperator to stay in compliance, no contract extension will be required.
- b. If extensive disking and leveling occurs, contract must be extended by one year or cooperator must refund entire amount of incentive payment.

Standards

NC NRCS Technical Guide, Section IV, Standard # 328 (Conservation Crop Rotation), #329A (Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till and Strip Till), and #340 (Cover Crop).

(Policy #11 added March 2010)