



Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Security Program

Talking Points

Minnesota, 2005

What is the Conservation Security Program (CSP)?



CSP is especially intended for farmers and producers who have been and are now applying good conservation practices on their farms. You might qualify for CSP payments for management activities or conservation measures you have already done.

CSP is available to all producers regardless of size of operation or crops produced. It is intended for working lands including cropland, grassland, improved pasture, rangeland, orchards and vineyards.

Farms traditionally ineligible for farm bill programs or those farmers who have usually not participated in farm programs in the past might qualify for CSP.

How does the program work?



Producers who share in the risk of producing crops or livestock on the agricultural operation are eligible to have a CSP contract. Landlords who receive only cash payments for renting the land are not eligible to apply for CSP on that land.

CSP will be offered in selected watersheds each year. The producers in those watersheds and the land they wish to enroll in the program will have to meet basic eligibility requirements of the program. USDA will set the minimum eligible for adequately treating soil and water quality. Payments will be made for this basic eligibility (Stewardship Payments and Existing Practice Payments).

CSP also offers payments for a wide range of practices and conservation activities that producers may wish to add to their farm (Enhancement Payments) such as use of bio-diesel, adding legumes or cover crops to the rotation, or increasing your level of irrigation water management.

CSP payments can be significant. In the 2004 signup in the Blue Earth Watershed, CSP contract payments ranged from \$9,900 to \$19,600 per year. Significant differences in each watershed make it difficult to predict whether payments will be similar in 2005, but examples will be available for each watershed at the time of a sign up. Generally, though, CSP contracts that involve the entire farm qualify for higher payments.

Enrolling even a single field may be worthwhile. Since there is no minimum acreage requirement for enrollment, you can enroll any amount of eligible land, from a single field to the entire agricultural operation. *Therefore, it's possible to qualify for CSP even if you have just one field,*

Conservation Security Program

Talking Points

Minnesota, 2005



pasture, or orchard that meets the designated enrollment criteria. Once enrolled, you may be able to increase the payments by adding more acres or additional enhancements to the contract.

There will be a limited window of opportunity to enroll. The sign up dates for 2005 have not been announced yet, but when they are, you will have to apply during that period. Currently USDA plans to rotate CSP through different watersheds across the nation each year, so it could be another 8 years before the opportunity to enroll in CSP returns to your watershed.

It's a competitive program. Applications will be ranked, and all applications may not be funded. The more conservation practices you have in place or are willing to do, the higher your ranking will be.

What needs to be done now?

Get a copy of the CSP Self-Assessment Workbook from the NRCS office in your county and begin the process of filling it out. This is a requirement of making an application for the program.

Start gathering your management records now. If you don't have current soil tests on your fields (taken in the last four years), get one now before freeze-up. You will need a soil test for each field that you may want to consider enrolling in CSP. If you apply manure, you will need a manure test.

You will need the following records for the past two years for each cropland field you wish to enroll: amount, type, timing and rate of commercial fertilizer and manure applications; rate, method and timing of pesticide applications and /or other insect and weed management activities such as biological control and scouting; crop rotation, yields, tillage equipment and number of passes made; irrigation dates and amounts (if applicable); on pastures, the number of animals grazed and forage available.

Check the Minnesota NRCS 2005 CSP web site frequently for CSP announcements and updates:

<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/csp.html>

Additional information and self assessment workbooks is available at your local USDA Service Center.