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# USDA Conservation Programs and the Truterra™ Insights Engine

Understanding USDA conservation programs can help farmers and ag retailers maximize environmental and economic benefits.

Farm Bill conservation programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help farmer-customers with financial and technical assistance for a wide range of conservation projects on-farm. Using the modeling and planning capabilities within the Truterra Insights Engine, farmers and ag retailers can better identify potential opportunities for USDA program participation, and identify what parts of a farm could provide the greatest possible return on conservation investment.

**There are three key USDA programs ag retailers should understand as they help farmer-customers use the Truterra Insights Engine:**

## 1 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by NRCS. Using this program, NRCS provides farmers with financial and technical assistance to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns on their operation while helping to achieve conservation goals - including cleaner water and air, healthier soil, and improved wildlife habitat. EQIP does not cover the full implementation cost, but provides financial assistance that helps offset the cost of conservation practices.

EQIP is a highly competitive program with limited funding and there is no guarantee of participation. Using the modeling capabilities of the Truterra Insights Engine, farmers and ag retailers can better understand what areas of a farm - and what conservation practices - could be most appropriate for EQIP financial assistance and support.

Prior to receiving an EQIP payment, an eligible producer must apply for the program and enter into and adhere to the terms of an EQIP contract that identifies the conservation work to be completed. In addition, farmers must meet specific eligibility requirements, including controlling or owning the eligible land, meeting criteria for Adjusted Gross Income and federal payment limitations, and following highly erodible land and wetlands conservation requirements.

## 2 CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a second voluntary conservation program that could help farmers who have conservation projects underway on their land. This program takes a “whole-farm” conservation approach. It provides technical and financial assistance to help farmers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems, as well as adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns, over a five-year contract period.

Payments are based on maintaining existing conservation, while implementing additional conservation activities on a farm. Applications for CSP assistance must include all agricultural land in a farmer’s operation that they will control for the five-year term of the CSP contract. CSP financial assistance offsets costs for practices, but may not cover the full implementation cost of conservation activities. Like EQIP, this is a highly competitive, application-based program with no guarantee of participation – and farmers must meet the same basic land management control, income and eligibility, following highly erodible land and wetlands conservation requirements to participate.

Using the modeling and planning capabilities of the Truterra Insights Engine, farmers and their ag retailers can better plan conservation activities across an operation – a capability that can help to identify potential conservation assistance opportunities through CSP.

## 3 CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary land conservation program administered by FSA. In exchange for yearly rental payments, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Payments are based on both an annual rental rate determined by FSA based on county estimates, as well as financial and technical assistance to install and maintain the conservation cover vegetation on the environmentally sensitive cropland areas. CRP is a competitive, application-based program with no guarantee of participation. Farmers must meet specific eligibility requirements, including controlling or owning the eligible land, meeting criteria for Adjusted Gross Income and federal payment limitations, and following highly erodible land and wetlands conservation requirements to participate.

For additional information on EQIP and CSP, and for a list of eligible practices, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

For additional information on CRP, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

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