

Name of Practice: CONTINUOUS NO-TILL FORAGE PRODUCTION SYSTEM  
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-15B

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Continuous No-Till Forage Production System best management practice which are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice is designed to expand implementation of continuous no-till planting systems, continuous cover, and nutrient management technologies that will result in the reduction of non-point source pollution to state waters from nutrients and sediments.

Its purpose is to reduce erosion by minimizing tillage of soils on cropland. This will improve soil quality by recognizing nutrient management indicators that manage the movement of nitrogen, phosphorous, sediments and runoff with the use of no-till planting techniques.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. All crops must be planted using no-till methods.
2. All eligible fields must be converting from a minimum or conventional till system to a continuous no-till system.
3. All eligible fields must have RUSLE2 soil loss calculations comparing the pre-practice conditions and the erosion that occurs after the practice is installed. The RUSLE2 comparison calculations must show a significant reduction in erosion for the field to be eligible. This amount should be entered in the appropriate column on the application form.
4. All eligible fields must have a cropping history two out of the past five years. Permanent grass or hay land is not considered cropland.
5. Cropping rotations that involve the removal of residue are eligible. Land must be covered with an actively growing crop. Straw may remain on the field. All crops must be planted utilizing no-till planting methods within 30 days of harvest, grazing or removal of biomass. Participants may receive payments for the cover crop practices and the Continuous No-till Forage Production System simultaneously, so long as all practice specifications have been met.
6. Cover crops are strongly encouraged throughout the life of the contract. If cover crops are planted, a good stand and good growth of winter cover should be obtained in sufficient time to protect the area in the fall and winter.
7. In order to be eligible for cost-share or tax credit, producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field on which this practice will be

implemented. The NMP must comply with all requirements set forth in the Nutrient Management Training and Certification Regulations (4VAC50-85 et seq.) and the Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria (revised July 2014); must be prepared and certified by a Virginia certified Nutrient Management Planner; and must be on file with the local District before any cost-share payment is made to the participant. Plans shall also contain any specific production management criteria designated in the BMP practice (4VACV50-85-130G).

8. State cost-share contracts will be provided only one time per field.
9. This practice is subject to NRCS Standards 340 Cover Crop, 328 Conservation Crop Rotation, 590 Nutrient Management, and 595 Integrated Pest Management.
10. All practice components implemented must be maintained for a minimum of five years following the calendar year of installation. The lifespan begins on Jan. 1 of the calendar year following the year of certification of completion. By accepting either a cost-share payment or a state tax credit for this practice, the participant agrees to maintain all practice components for the specified lifespan. This practice is subject to spot check by the District throughout the lifespan of the practice and failure to maintain the practice may result in reimbursement of cost-share and/or tax credits.

C. Rate(s)

1. As set forth by Virginia Code, the Commonwealth currently provides a tax credit for implementation of certain agricultural best management practices as discussed in the Tax Credit Guidelines of the VACS Manual.
2. If a participant receives cost-share, only the participant's eligible out-of-pocket share of the project cost is used to determine the tax credit.
3. The VACS payment rate is a one-time incentive payment of \$35 per acre.

D. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and District staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE. Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

Revised April 2023