Name of Practice: STRIPCROPPING SYSTEMS
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-3

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Stripcropping Systems best management practice which are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice will promote growing crops in a systematic arrangement of strips or bands across the general land slope to reduce water erosion and nutrient loss.

The purpose of this practice is to improve water quality by reducing the movement of sediment and nutrients from cultivated crop fields where other cultural and management practices alone are not adequate to reduce losses to tolerable limits.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Cost-share and tax credit are authorized on a per acre basis to cover a portion of the cost and serve as an incentive to establish a stripcropping system. In addition, a percentage rate has been established for the extra component in those systems that require obstruction removal such as fences, stonewalls, hedgerows, or gullies.

2. Cost-share and tax credit are authorized on a percentage basis for subsurface drains needed to eliminate spot seepage on 8% or greater slopes if the seepage makes cross-slope tillage impractical. Subsurface drains may be the sole component if spot seepage develops and makes cross-slope tillage impractical in existing stripcropping systems.

3. 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).

4. On acreage devoted to row crops, one of the following must apply:
   i. The crop stubble or residue must be left on the land during the winter.
   ii. A winter cover crop must be established.
   iii. Adequate protective tillage operations must be performed.

5. For contour stripcropping systems, tillage and planting operations must be performed as nearly as practical on the contour.

6. Cost-share and tax credit are not authorized for repeating any approved measures under this practice with the same person on the same acreage. This is a one-time incentive.

7. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications for use in establishing priority considerations.

8. This practice is subject to NRCS Standard 585 Contour Strip Cropping.

9. 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. If subsurface drains are installed as the sole component as provided for in subparagraph B.2, the stripcropping system and subsurface drains shall be maintained for at least 10 years following the calendar year in which the drains were installed. 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. A VACS payment rate of $30 per acre has been established for all acreage within the field. A 75% add on VACS payment rate has been established for components in those systems that require obstruction removal or subsurface drainage. Multiplying $30 per acre times the field acreage and adding 75% of the obstruction removal and/or subsurface drainage cost will compute the final amount. The VACS payment will not exceed 75% of the approved estimated cost or eligible actual cost, whichever is less.

2. 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.

3. 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.

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.

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