

News Feature

July 26,2004

For immediate release

Contact:

Norman Bade, CSP Program Manager, 254.742.9800
Quenna Terry, Public Affairs Officer, 806.791.0581

Conservation: It's picking up energy

Conservation Security Program offers incentives for energy management

It's no secret that natural resource conservation is quickly becoming a major part of American agricultural policy. But the latest conservation program to come out of that policy – USDA's Conservation Security Program – is also fostering another form of conservation on the nation's farms and ranches – energy management.

With the release of the interim final rule in mid June, the Natural Resources Conservation Service – the agency responsible for administering the program – announced that CSP would provide both cost-share and payment incentives designed to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and increase overall on-farm energy efficiency.

Dr. Larry Butler, NRCS State Conservationist in Texas said the agency will be offering a limited number of enhancements and new activity payments in this first sign-up as a "test drive."

"That's good news to agriculture and the environment in general," Butler said. "And it could be even better news for agricultural sectors involved in producing bio-based, renewable energy like corn, soybean and grain sorghum growers."

Producers in the first 18 watersheds eligible for the program this year could receive incentive payments for a number of on-farm energy conservation activities. Those include using renewable fuels, such as soy diesel and ethanol; reducing energy use based on an audit; renewable energy generation; and saving energy through a reduction in soil tillage operations. (If your state has a priority watershed you could say so here, in paragraph three, or wherever else you deem appropriate.)

Cost-share payments for producers who conduct an operations energy audit will also be available to qualifying producers. "This audit," Butler said, "will involve the use of industry and utilities professionals to help producers assess opportunities to reduce overall energy consumption on their entire operation."

In addition, CSP can provide cost-share payments to producer for the recycling of on-farm lubricants. "This feature allows the lubricants to be reused and recycled, and further reduces agriculture's impact on the environment."

CSP qualifying producers using bio-based fuels will receive payment per 500 gallons, based on the percentage of bio-based fuel in the mixture. “Rates will be determined at the national level for the first year,” Butler said, “but our agency will listen carefully to comments during the interim final rule comment period to determine how local factors should be considered in subsequent years.”

Through cost-share and incentive payments, Butler said, CSP will “help producers help the country reduce its dependence on fossil fuels through increased on-farm efficiencies,” and will “help generate additional demand for bio-based energy fuel sources.”

Five fact sheets on these new energy-saving components of CSP are available at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov>.

Additional information on CSP including the interim final rule is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

#