



Conservation Practice Overview

October 2020

CPS Contour Farming (Code 330)

Contour farming is using ridges, furrows, and roughness formed by tillage, planting and other farming operations at a grade near the contour to alter the velocity or the direction of water flow.

Practice Information

Contour farming is generally used on sloping land where tillage, planting, and cultivation are used to grow annual crops.

In a properly designed contour farming system the tillage furrows intercept runoff and allow more moisture to infiltrate into the soil. Contour farming is most effective on slopes between 2 and 10 percent.

Conservation benefits may include, but are not limited to—

- Reduced sheet and rill erosion.
- Reduced sediment transport to surface waters
- Reduce excess nutrients in surface waters
- Reduce pesticide transport to surface waters
- Increased water infiltration.

To maintain the effectiveness of this practice, all tillage and planting operations must be parallel to the established markers.

Common Associated Practices

Because rainfall amounts occasionally exceed the ability of contours to control runoff, Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Contour Farming (Code 330) is commonly planned in conjunction with other erosion controlling CPSs such as Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (Code 345) and No-Till (Code 329); and Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332).

To protect areas of existing or potential concentrated flow erosion CPS Contour Farming (Code 330) is commonly applied with CPSs such as Grassed Waterway (Code 412), Water and Sediment Control Basin (Code 638), and Underground Outlet (Code 620).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.

