



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Salina, Kansas

Contour Farming

August 2002
Job Sheet 330

Producer's Name: _____ Date: _____

Legal Description/Field No.: _____

Scope: Contour farming is preparing the soil, planting, and cultivating crops on the contour rather than up and down the hill. Contour rows run across the slope nearly on the level. This specification provides guidelines for establishment and maintenance of contour farming.

Purpose of Practice:

- Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- Reduce transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants.
- Other.

Soil Map Unit(s): _____

	Field No.					
Hydrologic Group						
Field Slope %						
Critical Slope Length (ft.)						
Minimum Row Grade %						
Soil Loss Prediction						
–Before (T/A/Y)						
–After (T/A/Y)						

Field Border or Outlet Establishment:

Site Preparation: Prepare firm, weed-free seedbed. Apply fertilizer according to recommendations.

Planting Methods: Drill grass/legume seed no more than 3/8-inch deep uniformly over area. Establish stand of vegetation according to recommended seeding rate. If necessary, mulch newly seeded area with _____ tons per acre of mulch material. If a companion crop is necessary apply at _____ pounds per acre. Clip companion crop or harvest before seed head development.

Operation and Maintenance: Perform all tillage and planting operations parallel to contour baselines or terraces, diversions, or contour buffer strip boundaries where these practices are used, provided the applicable row grade criteria are met. Where terraces, diversions, or contour buffer strips are not present, **maintain contour markers** on grades that, when followed during establishment of each crop, will maintain crop rows at designed grades. Contour markers may be field boundaries, a crop row left untilled near or on an original contour baseline, or other readily identifiable, continuous, lasting marker. All tillage and planting operations shall be parallel to the established marker. If a marker is lost, re-establish a contour baseline within the applicable criteria set forth by this standard prior to seedbed preparation for the next crop. Farming operations should begin on the contour baselines and proceed both up and down the slope in a parallel pattern until patterns meet. Where field operations begin to converge between two non-parallel contour baselines, establish a correction area that is either permanently in sod, established to an annual close-grown crop, or is in Cover-Management Condition 3. Where contour row curvature becomes too sharp to keep machinery aligned with rows during field operations, establish sod turn strips on sharp ridge points or other odd areas as needed. Renovate field borders as needed to maintain at least 65 percent ground cover. Maintain adequate field border width to allow farm implements room to turn.

