



Natural Resources Conservation Service

North Carolina

Section II-(A)

Introduction

Three categories of important farmlands are recognized in North Carolina—prime, unique, and statewide. Criteria used for prime and unique farmlands were published January 31, 1978 in the Federal Register and amended in June 17, 1994. These criteria are also in General Manual, Title 310-Land Use, section 403.3 and Section 622 of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Soil Survey Handbook (Title 430). Criteria for farmland of statewide importance were developed in 1988 by the North Carolina NRCS State Soils Staff in consultation with soil survey cooperators, resource conservationists, and key soil survey customers.

Prime Farmland

In general, all soils with slopes between 0 and 8 percent that are in capability classes I and II, and some that are in capability class III meet the requirements for prime farmland. Soils that flood or are somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, and very poorly drained soils meet the requirements for prime farmland under certain conditions if the following requirements are met:

1. The soils are drained and the drainage system is adequate to maintain the water table at a sufficient depth during the growing season to allow cultivated crops common to the area to be grown.
2. The soils are protected or not frequently flooded during the growing season.

Excluded from prime farmland are soils that fall into the following categories:

1. Cobbly, stony, or bouldery soils.
2. Soils having adverse physical or chemical properties that restrict crop yields such as shallowness to bedrock, fragipans, low available water capacity, etc.
3. Wet soils (somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, and very poorly drained) that are in clayey families.
4. Severely eroded phases.
5. Sandy phases of soils in a coarse-loamy family.
6. Soils with slopes that exceed 8 percent.

Unique Farmland

In general, soils that have a special set of properties that are unique for producing certain high-value crops meet the requirements for unique farmland. In North Carolina soils on which blueberries are produced meet these requirements. In this listing drained phases of the Leon, Lynn and Murville series are examples of soils in this category.

Farmland of Statewide Importance

In general, soils that do not quite meet the requirements for prime farmland fall into this category. This could be due to steepness of slope, permeability, susceptibility to erosion, low available water capacity, or some other soil property.

The following criteria were selected to help define farmland of statewide importance in North Carolina:

1. Slopes shall not exceed 15 percent.
2. Stony, very stony, extremely stony, very cobbly, and bouldery phases are excluded.
3. Severely eroded phases are excluded.
4. Wet soils that have very slow permeability (< 0.06 in/hr) are excluded.
5. Somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, and very poorly drained soils that are not drained are excluded.
6. Soil that are frequently flooded during the growing season are excluded.
7. Soils that are droughty, 3 inches or less available water capacity to a limiting layer or 40 inch depth, are excluded from this category.
8. Rocky phases or soils that have rock outcrop in the map unit name are excluded from this category.