



**Crop Rotation
for Improved
Soil Health**

*Alabama Practice Job Sheet
Conservation Crop Rotation
No. AL328*



Prepared for: _____

Prepared by: _____

Farm: _____ Tract Number: _____ Date: _____

DEFINITION:

This practice means growing various crops on the same piece of land in a planned sequence. This sequence may involve growing high residue producing crops such as corn or wheat in rotation with low residue producing crops such as vegetables, soybeans, cotton, or peanuts. The rotation may also involve growing forage crops in rotation with various field crops.

PURPOSES: (check all applicable):

- Reduce sheet-and-rill erosion.
- Improve soil health.
- Supply nitrogen through biological nitrogen fixation to reduce energy use
- Manage plant pests (weeds, insects, and diseases).
- Provide feed for domestic livestock.

Crop rotations can be a critical practice used by producers to reduce erosion, manage plant pest and improve soil health. Effective crop rotations often include a mix of many different crops and cover crops. Adding diversity to cropping systems will often increase the amount of residue that is returned to the soil which is critical in improving soil health, and it will also allow diversity in pesticides used. Increasing the diversity in the pesticides used is an effective way to reduce risk of creating and treating populations of resistant pest. Adding perennial forage crops are very effective in crop rotations due to the increased soil organic matter and reduced erosion. Additionally, any diversity into

cropping systems often reduces economic risk, and makes more efficient use of equipment and labor. Crop rotation should be planned as a part of a system that includes other practices including the following; residue and tillage management (329 or 345), cover crop (340), nutrient management (590) and other supporting practices to promote soil health.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE

APPLIES:

This practice applies to all cropland.

SPECIFICATIONS:

The information provided in this job sheet and attachments (conservation plan, maps, and other documents) will meet the requirements of this practice. The following provides the basic requirements of this standard:

- o Site specific evaluation of the properties of the site (soil, topography, and climate), equipment available to be used and the conservation goals of the producer will be used to determine sequence of crops and length of time crops are to be grown. Table1 will the list sequence of crops and the length of the rotation.
- o Substitutions of crops in the rotation in the case of crop failure or shifts in planting intentions for weather related or economic reasons are acceptable. Generally, acceptable substitutions are crops having similar properties that will accomplish the purpose of the original crop.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for establishment and operation of this practice shall be prepared for each field or treatment unit using the approved practice implementation requirements and recorded in Table 1, a narrative statement in the conservation plan, attached maps, and other applicable documents.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Evaluate the rotation and the crop sequence to determine if the planned system is meeting the planned purposes.

Table 1. Site specific implementation requirements for each field or treatment unit that meets the conservation goals and producer's goals that are being treated with this practice.

	Track/Field	Sequence of crops	Length of time for each crop	Total length of rotation
Existing Cropping System				
Planned Cropping System				
Below is a brief description of the existing and planned cropping system.				
Existing Cropping System				
Planned Cropping System				

Practice Design Certification (To be completed after job sheet is complete and before practice installation)

The site specific requirements for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the practice on the client's treatment unit, as recorded in this job sheet, attached programmatic requirement (attached if applicable) and other attached documents, have been prepared in accordance with the 328 Conservation Crop Rotation Standard:

Planner: _____ **Date:** _____
 (Signature)

Landowner/Cooperator: _____ **Date:** _____
 (Signature)

EQIP Practice Guidelines

328: Conservation Crop Rotation

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Contract Number: _____

In addition to the general specifications there are additional limitations if there are EQIP payments associated with the practice.

There are two different payment options within EQIP, sod based rotation and incorporating an additional high residue crop into the rotation. Included is a list of limitations (that are clearly marked) that must be met in order to complete the conservation crop rotation component of your conservation plan.

When managing to improve soil health and/or reducing the risk associated with resistant pest, increasing the number of crops in the rotation can yield great benefits. By incorporating high residue producing crops into a rotation dominated by low residue crops will return more crop residue to the soil. This added residue will not only reduce soil erosion but will also build soil organic matter and improve soil health over time.

- Perennial grass must be planted and maintained for forage production to improve soil health.
- Grass should be managed for two years followed by two years of crop production if a conservation tillage system (no-till/strip till 329 or mulch till 345) is maintained during the two years of crop production.
- Grass should be managed for three years followed by two years of crop production if a conventional tillage system (seasonal tillage 344) is maintained during the two years of crop production.

- EQIP limitation Conservation Crop Rotation (increasing high residue crop diversity):**
 - Improve crop rotation by adding at least one high residue crop to the current crop rotation. For a list of common high residue crop in Alabama see table below.

EQIP eligibility Conservation Crop Rotation (Applicable to all EQIP contracts):

- Acres eligible for the incentive payments are acres that have not adopted the planned conservation crop rotation. The planned crop rotation must meet the marked limitations in order to receive payment.

List of common high residue crops in Alabama

High residue crops
Corn (grain or sweet corn)
Sorghum (grain)
Small grains (grain)

- EQIP limitation Conservation Crop Rotation (sod based rotation):**

Alabama Practice Certification:

328: Conservation Crop Rotation

Landowner/Cooperator _____

Field Office _____

Farm/Tract No. _____

A visual assessment of the area is consistent with the implementation of this practice and the producer certifies that the crop rotation was performed as described in AI 328-2 (Table 1), the conservation plan and/or all limitations associated with program payments.

Yes___ No___

Notes:

This practice has been installed according to the site specific installation requirements and meets standards and specifications:

NRCS Certification: _____ **Date:** _____
(Signature)