



Contour farming is using ridges and furrows formed by tillage, planting, and other farming operations to change the direction of runoff from directly downslope to around the hill slope. The purposes of this practice are to reduce sheet and rill erosion, reduce transport of sediment, other solids, and the contaminants attached to them, and to increase water infiltration. This practice applies on sloping land where annual crops are grown.

Contour farming practice is established as a component of a resource management system. Crop rotation, integrated pest management, nutrient management, various structures, and buffer practices are used in resource management planning to address the natural resource concerns identified during the planning process.

Practice specifications are provided to assure the contour farming system meets the resource needs and producer's objectives.

Minimum Row Grade: Grade of crop rows shall have sufficient grade to ensure that runoff water does not pond and cause unacceptable crop damage.

Maximum Row Grade. The maximum row grade shall not exceed:

- one-half of the up-and-down hill slope percent used for conservation planning, or
- 10 percent, whichever is less.

Up to a 25 percent deviation from the design row grade is permitted within 150 feet of a stable outlet. When the row grade reaches the maximum allowable design grade, establish a new baseline up or down slope from the last contour line, and used this for layout of the next contour pattern. All tillage and planting operations will follow the contour line established.

Minimum Ridge Height.

- **Row spacing greater than 10 inches.** The minimum ridge height shall be 2 inches during the period of the rotation that is most vulnerable to sheet and rill erosion.
- **Row spacing 10 inches or less.** The minimum ridge height shall be 1 inch for close-grown crops, such as small grains. Plant height shall be 6 inches high and have a within row spacing of 2 inches during the time most vulnerable to sheet and rill erosion.

Stable Outlets. Deliver surface flow from contoured fields to stable outlets.

CONTOUR FARMING JOB SHEET

Operation and maintenance activities address the following:

- 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 maybe field boundaries, a crop row left untilled near or on an original contour baseline or other readily identifiable, continuous, lasting marker. Perform all tillage and planting operations 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, or established to an annual close-grown crop.
- 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.

Certification

This practice can be certified by completing the applied column in the site specific sheet

