



Economic Benefits

Introduction

Though CED Worksheets and Case Studies in Section V are based upon site specific conditions resulting from a conservation system-based approach, Economic Data Sheets provide both the planner and landowner information about the economic benefits of individual conservation practices.

Economic Data Sheets

Economic Data Sheets consist of Economic Technical Sheets and Landowner Information Sheets. Both Economic Technical Sheets and Landowner Information Sheets provide data regarding conservation practice benefits including basic information about input costs and operation and maintenance considerations.

Economic Technical Sheets

Economic Technical Sheets provide detailed benefit data for conservation practices. This technical information may be used by the conservation planner to calculate site-specific benefits, total installation cost (i.e. short term) and operation and maintenance cost considerations (i.e. long term). The Economic Technical Sheets may also provide economic analysis such as a break-even analysis, partial budgeting, cost effectiveness, marginal analysis, or other analyses as deemed appropriate.

Landowner Information Sheets

Landowner Information Sheets consist of more generalized information that may assist the landowner in understanding the benefits of conservation practices in a qualitative sense. Landowner Information Sheets also address the existing social, technical and/or organizational and economic barriers that some landowners may experience.

An example of a social barrier for landowners would be NRCS and discipline-specific technical jargon. The NRCS Social Sciences Team found that “agency people” get into the habit of talking agency jargon. This jargon is minimized in Landowner Information Sheets. Information Sheets are written to convey information simply and precisely and use visual aids and/or pictorial guides to communicate the purpose and need of a conservation practice.

Most technical barriers for landowners result from a lack of basic information. In a study conducted by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, a random sample of white farmers with less than \$40,000/year in gross sales and all black other minority farmers within the sample area were questioned about what information they needed before they adopted a given conservation practice. The study reported that for Small Scale Farmers, conservation information should be based on:

- Factors relating to production – not conservation.
- Equipment costs
- “How to”
- General costs

Landowner Information Sheets also address organizational barriers since they can provide a way for the field staff to communicate with landowners who have never dealt with NRCS or perhaps any USDA agency before. The Alabama study found that small scale/limited resource farmers preferred printed materials such as bulletins and newsletters when receiving government information.

Landowner Information Sheets also deal with economic barriers because they discuss using equipment that is already on-hand and existing know-how or for making small changes that could translate into greater impacts.

Though descriptions of “barriers” are used to illustrate the need for a more simplified format and more appropriate communication methods for some operators, the Landowner Information Sheets can be useful to any agricultural operator.

Conclusion

The Economic Technical Sheets are intended for the planner to use in providing information to the landowner regarding benefits of conservation practices. However, both Economic Technical Sheets and Landowner Information Sheets may be used by the landowner. It is the planner’s decision as to whether or not the Economic Technical Sheet format or Landowner Information Sheet format is more appropriate for his/her customer.