

Land User _____ County _____ Date _____

Farm # _____ Tract # _____ Assisted By _____

Contour Farming



Definition

Contour farming is tillage, planting, and other farming operations performed on or near the contour of the field slope. Contour farming is used on sloping land where crops are grown.

Purpose

This practice is applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following:

- To reduce sheet and rill erosion
- To reduce transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants
- To reduce transport of contaminants in solution runoff
- To increase water filtration

Conservation Management System

Contour farming is most effective on slopes between 2 and 10 percent. This practice will be less effective in achieving the stated purpose(s) on slopes exceeding 10 percent and in areas with 10-year, 24-hour rainfall **of about 6.5 inches**. Contour farming is a component of conservation management systems. A conservation management system is a combination of conservation practices and management that achieves a level of treatment for our soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources while also meeting the objectives of the land user. In addition to contour farming, practices such as residue management, crop rotation, cover crops, pest management, nutrient management, grassed waterways and other structures are often needed.

General Specifications

- **Minimum Row Grade.** The 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 with a maximum 4 percent row grade based upon RUSLE2 or the current soil loss erosion technology software
- All tillage operations will be done as near the contour as practical to conserve water and to remove surface runoff to a stable outlet
- Where diversions, terraces, access roads and other contoured practices that meet Georgia NRCS standards exist, they will be used as a guide for tillage operations

Additional Guidelines

- Contour farming is more effective if the rows are on or near the true contour and if the row ridges are high enough to route runoff water around the slope
- Additional conservation practices such as grassed waterways, diversions, terraces, or underground outlets may also be needed to treat concentrated flow erosion

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 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.

Practice Lifespan 5 years

For More Information Contact your local NRCS Office and Soil & Water Conservation District

Contour Farming

Georgia
Conservation Practice Job Sheet – 330 (10/15)

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| | |
| | Plans and Specifications Checklist |
| | Percent land slope |
| | Minimum and maximum allowable grades |
| | A sketch map or photo showing the location of baselines and location of stable outlets |
| | |
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| | |
| Date | Operation and Maintenance Notes |
| | |
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| | |

Jobsheet Certifications

Prepared by _____ Title _____ Date _____

Approved by _____ Title _____ Date _____

Installation Meets NRCS Standards and Specifications

Certified by _____ Title _____ Date: _____