

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**  
**CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS**  
**CONTOUR FARMING**

**1. Scope**

The work shall consist of farming cultivated land so that all farming operations are carried out on the contour.

**2. Layout**

The farming operations will be conducted on the contour of the land as shown on the conservation plan map or drawings.

Maximum row grade shall not exceed 2 percent or one-half of the uphill and downhill slope, whichever is less.

Up to 3 percent row grade is permitted within 150 feet of a stable outlet.

Field markers shall be installed or identified to provide guide posts for equipment operators.

Reference lines for contour farming will:

- Not deviate more than 1 percent grade from key contour lines, except within 150 feet or less from a stable outlet, grade deviation will not exceed 3 percent.
- Be established on 0.2 to 1.0 percent grade for slowly or very slowly permeable soils (soil hydrologic group C or D) toward a stable drainage course.
- Be spaced so seedbed preparation, planting, and cultivating of crops can be managed within the above guidelines.

Contour farming layout shall not occur on hill slopes that exceed the critical slope length, which is the maximum length of slope on which the contouring practice will be effective. Slope lengths shall not exceed the following values. These values may be increased by 25 percent when at least 50 percent soil surface residue cover is present throughout the cropping rotation.

<b>Slope</b>	<b>1-2%</b>	<b>3-5%</b>	<b>6-8%</b>	<b>9-12%</b>
<b>Length</b>	400 ft.	300 ft.	200 ft.	120 ft.

**3. Cultural Operations**

Farming operations shall be performed in a manner so that:

- Dead furrows are not left in the same place each time.
- Reference lines will be established and maintained near to the contour.
- Reference lines will be spaced so seedbed preparation, planting, and cultivating of the crop can be carried out within the above guidelines.
- Tillage operations, planting, and cultivating will be done parallel to contour reference lines, provided row gradients within the system do not exceed 2 percent for distances of 100 feet or unless graded toward grassed water courses or to adjust for turns on field ridges.
- On irrigated land, furrow lengths are in accordance with the irrigation guide.
- Runoff water is safely conducted away from critical areas to a protected outlet.

- Small areas, less than 10 percent of the field, may be exempt from contouring.
- Farming operations performed parallel to terraces or diversions constitute contour farming, if the resulting row gradients meet the minimum requirements of these specifications.
- Headlands or end rows that are steeper than the maximum row grade criteria shall be established to permanent field borders.

#### **4. Documentation**

Items marked with an asterisk (\*) shall be recorded as minimum documentation requirements:

- \*Identified problem or resource concern and practice objectives.
- \*Extent of acres.
- \*Crop rotation or sequence.
- \*Soil loss prediction estimates.
- Fertility management.
- Pest (weed, disease, insect) management.

The minimum specifications for this practice will be recorded in the conservation plan narrative, appropriate job sheet, or the conservation assistance notes.

#### **5. Other Requirements**

The owner, operator, contractor, or other persons shall conduct all work and operations in accordance with proper safety code for the type of equipment and operations being performed with due regard to the safety of all persons and property.