



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Parkade Center, Suite 250, 601 Business Loop 70 West
Columbia, Missouri 65203

January 25, 2010

MISSOURI TECHNICAL GUIDE TRANSMITTAL NO. 469

The following Missouri conservation practice standard, statement of work (SOW) and job sheet have been posted on the Missouri eFOTG:

- *Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops (798): Standard and SOW*
- *Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops Job Sheet (JS-AGRON-35)*

Background: Seasonal high tunnel systems offer an opportunity to extend the growing season to successfully produce vegetables and other specialty crops, annual or perennial, for personal or commercial use. High tunnels are applicable to all farms, but may offer particular advantages to small, limited resource, and organic farmers by extending the growing season, producing higher quality crops, improving yields, and addressing soil and water quality concerns.

A seasonal high tunnel, by NRCS definition, is a non-engineered, polyethylene covered structure with no electrical, ventilation, or heating system, at least 6 feet in height, which modifies the climate to create more favorable growing conditions for vegetable and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil beneath it. The high tunnels are typically constructed of metal bow frames covered with a single layer of polyethylene. Ventilation is achieved by means of a combination of roll-up side vents, end vents, and occasionally, roof vents. Generally, the end walls are framed in to create door and ventilation areas. The high tunnel structure covers several crop rows, is wide enough to allow crop growth to full maturity under the tunnel, and is tall enough to allow spraying, cultivation and harvest to occur with the tunnel intact. The tunnel cover may need to be removed before winter, unless the Operation and Maintenance Plan states otherwise.

The Ecological Sciences Division has developed an interim conservation practice standard for the seasonal high tunnel system which will be utilized in Missouri. We will be participating in a national 3-year pilot to test the validity of potential conservation benefits of the seasonal high tunnel system. Installation of a high tunnel can cause erosion and water ponding issues that could require the application of several other measures such as roof runoff control. Supporting practices, to include nutrient and pest management, and crop rotation, should be considered as a part of the conservation plan. Planned supporting practices must be installed and maintained for their practice lifespans. Only commercially available high tunnel structures will be utilized for the pilot. Some manufacturers' designs include the option of gutters. Other kits will require the use of an infiltration trench or other means to collect runoff water from the high tunnel roof.

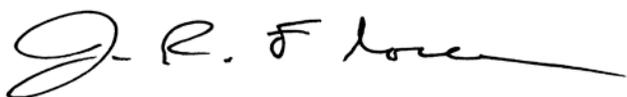
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Use of the interim practice standard requires annual reporting by Missouri NRCS to national headquarters. Participating producers must be made aware of the reporting requirements as identified in this Technical Guide Notice. NRCS reporting requirements are contained in the Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops Job Sheet (798).

Actions needed when using the Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops (798) standard.

1. Provide conservation planning assistance to eligible producers interested in participating in the Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops pilot program. Include all supporting practices in the conservation plan. Address potential erosion and ponding issues from roof runoff or surface flow of storm water as needed.
2. Include an environmental evaluation and cultural resources review in the planning process.
3. Use the MO798 job sheet and the NRCS High Tunnel Season Extension Guide to assist with site specific planning for the proposed seasonal high tunnel system. Include any additional practice plans for supporting practices. Include the statement of work for high tunnels with the packet of information given to the producer and explain the value of each document thoroughly.
4. Seasonal high tunnels will be offered through EQIP sign-ups.
5. Use RUSLE2 to document sheet and rill erosion for the field where each proposed seasonal high tunnel will be installed.
6. Ensure that each contract holder participating in the seasonal high tunnel pilot understands the requirement for annual reporting due each December for three years.

If you have any questions regarding Seasonal High Tunnel Systems for Crops (798), please contact Paul Duffner, Resource Conservationist, State Office, Columbia, MO.



J.R. FLORES
State Conservationist

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