

## LEGISLATED PROGRAMS

### **Food Security Act**

The conservation compliance provision of the Food Security Act (FSA) of 1985, as amended by the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (1996 Farm Bill), requires that all USDA program participants must apply an approved conservation system that meets the following criteria when producing an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land.

1. A conservation system designed to meet the HELC requirements is a combination of one or more conservation measures or management practices. When applied to the land, the conservation system will bring either a substantial reduction in soil erosion or, in the case of land converted from native vegetation, allow for no substantial increase in soil erosion.
2. The conservation system shall include all treatments and measures needed to meet the HELC requirements, including treatment required for the control of sheet and rill erosion, wind erosion and ephemeral gully erosion.
3. For highly erodible fields which were used to produce agricultural commodities prior to December 23, 1985, the applicable conservation system must achieve a substantial reduction in soil erosion. A substantial reduction is defined as a 75 percent reduction of the potential erodibility (PE) or not more than two times the soil loss tolerance level (2T), whichever is less, for the predominant highly erodible soil map unit in the highly erodible field. Note: For an HEL soil a 75 percent reduction of the PE will never be less than 2T.
4. For highly erodible fields converted from native vegetation after December 23, 1985 the applied conservation system shall not result in a substantial increase in soil erosion. A substantial increase in soil erosion is defined as any soil erosion level that is greater than the soil loss tolerance (T) of the predominant HEL soil mapping unit in the HEL field.
  - Native vegetation includes all land that has never been broken and has no crop history. It may contain non-native plants that have encroached, such as Smooth brome grass, Kentucky bluegrass, or non-native trees.
  - Evidence of cropping history must be from documented sources such as Farm Service Agency records or aerial photography interpretation.