

United States Department of Agriculture



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**SUBJECT: VIRGINIA FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE – SECTION IV –
Virginia Conservation Practice Standard**

Purpose: To transmit revised Interim Virginia Conservation Practice Standard Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops (798) dated November 2010.

Effective Date: Upon receipt.

Filing Instructions: This standard can be accessed electronically in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide at: <http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx>.

If your office maintains a hard copy of the Field Office Technical Guide, please follow these filing instructions:

Replace Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops, Code 798, dated March 2010 with Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops, Code 798, dated November 2010.

Job Sheet for this Practice Standard has been placed in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

The outdated standard will be archived in the archived folder in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

Background: The use of Interim Conservation Practice Standard (798), “Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crop”, offers a technology to extend the growing season in many areas of the United States to successfully produce vegetable and other specialty crops for personal or commercial use. High Tunnel have applicability to all farms, but may offer particular advantages to small, limited-resource, and organic farmers by extending the growing season, producing higher-quality crops, improved yields and addressing soil and water quality concerns. The interim standard has been used for about 9 months. Many producers have requested to add fans, heaters, and roll-up sides as features that would improve function and efficiency. Interim Conservation Practice Standard (798), “Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops”, has been revised to relax the restrictions on electrical heating and mechanical ventilation System. This revision is applicable to previous facilities planned and installed.

Explanation: The purpose of the interim standard remains the same: to provide a simple structure for producers to use to extend the growing season. The purposes within the standard remain the same. The intention is not to build greenhouses. The definition of the practice has been revised to delete the verbiage relating to no electrical, heating, or mechanical ventilation System.

The new practice definition for (798) reads: “A seasonal polyethylene-covered structure that is used to cover crops to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner.” This will

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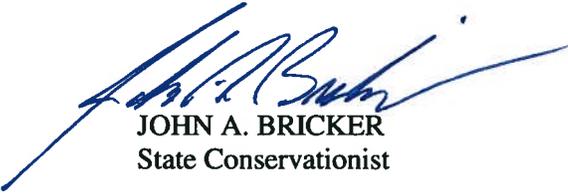
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provide the opportunity for those producers who want to add the additional electrical, heaters, and ventilation System to do so at their own expense. This change in the definition should have no impact on current payment schedules. Payment schedules are based on the least-cost alternative.

The criteria for the interim standard remains unchanged. If the addition of electrical or mechanical equipment adds to the structural requirements of the structure, it is up to the producer to fund the higher-cost structure. The seasonal high tunnel system must still be a manufactured kit, as stated in the criteria. NRCS is not to design structural components to facilitate integrating electrical or mechanical System into the structure and will not share on the cost of a stronger structure to support electrical or mechanical System.

Contact: Contact Chad Wentz, State Resource Conservationist at 804-287-1668 for technical related questions.



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Enclosure

