

## Questions and Answers

August 2005

## ***Agricultural Management Assistance***

### **Q. What is the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program?**

**A.** AMA is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance through long-term contracts to agricultural producers on private lands to construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; to plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and to mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

### **Q. Is AMA available nationwide?**

**A.** AMA is available in 15 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. They are: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

### **Q. Where are AMA applications accepted?**

**A.** Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

### **Q. What is the maximum cost-share amount allowed for each AMA contract?**

**A.** The total AMA payments – (from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and Risk Management Agency (RMA)) – shall not exceed \$50,000 per participant for any fiscal year. The Federal cost-share is 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice.

### **Q. When may an interested party sign-up for the program?**

**A.** Interested landowners submit AMA applications under a continuous sign-up. Cutoff dates for ranking the applications are determined by the NRCS State Conservationist in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

### **Q. Is a conservation plan required?**

**A.** A conservation plan is required for the area covered in the application and becomes the basis for developing the AMA contract. NRCS will work with the landowner to develop a conservation plan.

### **Q. Will practices be maintained after contracts expire?**

**A.** Landowners must agree to maintain cost-shared practices for the life of the practice, which may extend beyond the end of the contract. USDA hopes AMA participants will want to continue to voluntarily address issues, such as water management, water quality, and erosion control, by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

**Q. What land is eligible for AMA?**

**A.** The following land is eligible for AMA:

- Cropland
- Hayland
- Pasture and rangeland
- Land used for subsistence purposes
- Other land (such as forestland) that produces crops or livestock where risk may be mitigated through operation diversification or change in resource conservation practices.

**Q. What level of cost-sharing is available?**

**A.** The Federal cost-share rate is 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice, based on the percent of actual cost, or percent of actual cost with not-to-exceed limits, or flat rates.

Participants will be paid based upon certification and verification of completion of the approved practice.

**Q. What are incentive payments?**

**A.** Incentive payments provide financial assistance to encourage producers to perform land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, irrigation water management, and wildlife habitat management.

**Q. When are payments made?**

**A.** Participants will be paid upon certification that the approved practice has been completed according to NRCS standards and specifications.

**Q. How are applications selected for funding?**

**A.** Applications are selected based on a state-developed ranking and selection process. The ranking criteria will emphasize:

- Construction or improvement of water management structures or irrigation structures.
- Planting trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality.
- Mitigating risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

**Q. Is other assistance available through AMA?**

**A.** NRCS has leadership for the conservation provisions of AMA. USDA's AMS is responsible for an organic certification cost-share program and RMA is responsible for mitigation of financial risk through an insurance cost-share program.

***For More Information***

If you need more information about AMA, please contact your local USDA Service Center listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama> .



Visit USDA on the Web at:  
<http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>

**Note:** This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures. Please check back for updates.