

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Contour Farming (330)

Contour farming is using ridges and furrows formed by tillage, planting and other farming operations to change the direction of runoff from directly downslope to around the hillslope.

Practice Information

Contour farming is generally used on sloping land where tillage, planting, and cultivation are used to grow annual crops.

In a properly designed contour farming system the tillage furrows intercept runoff and allow more moisture to infiltrate into the soil. Contour farming is most effective on slopes between 2 and 10 percent.

Conservation benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- reduced sheet and rill erosion
- reduced transport of sediment, other solids and the contaminants attached to them
- increased water infiltration

To maintain the effectiveness of this practice, all tillage and planting operations must be parallel to the established markers.



Common Associated Practices

Because rainfall amounts occasionally exceed the ability of contours to control runoff, Contour Farming (330) is commonly planned in conjunction with other erosion controlling practices such as, Residue and Tillage Management Practices; Mulch Till (345), No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed (329), and Ridge Till (346); and Contour Buffer Strips (332).

To protect areas of existing or potential concentrated flow erosion Contour Farming (330) is commonly applied with practices such as Grassed Waterway (412), Water and Sediment Control Basin (638), and Underground Outlet (620).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.