Farmers Have Two Years To Meet Conservation Guidelines

Farmers with highly- eligible for USDA farm proerodible cropland have just two years to meet the conservation requirements of the 1985 Farm Bill and remain eligible for USDA benefits.

Wilson Scaling, Chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service, said those provisions require farmers who have highly erodible land to have a conservation plan approved by their local conservation district by December 31, 1989, and have it implemented by December 31, 1994, to remain

conservation plan as of October 1, 1987. "Our goal is to have 65 percent of this land

gram benefits, loans, or guarantees on all their land.

About 800,000 conservation plans need to be developed in the next two years, Scaling said. "The sooner farmers ask for a plan, the greater the chance that we will get to everyone by the deadline."

Scaling said only 20 percent of the highly erodible cropland was placed under a under a conservation plan by eye, farmers should check

highly erodible cropland in Program. Under CRP, landowners receive annual rental payments for putting highly erodible cropland in permanent cover such as grass or trees. The next CRP signup will be February 1-19,

is not always obvious to the farmers.'

the end of 1988 and the rest by the end of 1989," he said.

Another option is to enroll meets the criteria.

"Contacting the local SCS the Conservation Reserve office for a conservation plan soon is probably one of the smartest New Year's resolutions a farmer can make," Scaling said. "Most farmers who participate in USDA programs can't afford to lose those benefits. And, the economy of most rural communities is dependent on the Since highly erodible land financial health of its

Farmers May Deduct Conservation

Farmers wanting to deduct plied under an individual soil conservation expenditures on their federal tax developed with SCS forms need to be aware of changes included in the Tax those practices listed on the Reform Act of 1986 according county conservation plan." to Bobbye J. Jones, SCS State Conservationist. The new tax laws require all deducted soil conservation expenditures to be included in county-wide or individual conservation plans

approved by SCS.
"Farmers can obtain apways," explains Jones. office. "Either the practice is ap-

farm conservation plan assistance or it is among

Each county has developed a county conservation plan that lists about 15 different practices. Farmers can apply these practices on their own and still qualify for the tax deduction. This list is proval through one of two available from the local SCS

returns, farmers must certify which type of conservation plan their deduction is based on. Only the county conservation plan, as SCS assisted individual conservation plan or a plan approved by a comparable state agency will be accepted by the IRS. The taxpayer must support expenses incurred and show that the practice was applicable to

the specific situation. Practices listed under the county conservation plan might include cover crops, When filing their tax critical area planting, field

borders, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, firebreaks, livestock exclusion, streambank protection, water control structures, wildlife habitat development, spring development, surface field drainage, and troughs and tanks for livestock water.

Practices not included in county plans are eligible for tax deduction only if included in an individual conservation plan prepared or approved by SCS.

Signup For Conservation Program

Signup for the Conserva- a bid process at the time of qualify for the program, and croplands by January 1, 1990, tion Reserve Program (CRP) begins February 1 and ends February 19. Farmers and landowners may enter highly erodible cropland into the program at the county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of-

Under CRP a farmer or landowner converts highly erodible cropland to grass or signup has been expanded, meet the compliance provitrees. In return, the receive commented annual rental payments for 10 years. The rental payments are determined by highly erodible in order to plan on all highly erodible

signup. "Acceptable bids have been around \$45 per acre in the Piedmont and be 3T or higher. Now, if the Mountains and \$50 per acre in farmer or landowner will the Coastal Plain," said agree to plant trees, a field Mitch Clary, assistant state with only one-third highly conservationist with the erodible soil and an erosion USDA Soil Conservation Ser- rate of 2T will qualify," ex-

Clary. "Previously, two thirds of a field had to be considered

to be considered highly erodible the soil erosion rate must plained Clary.

CRP is seen as one of the The eligibility for this best ways for farmers to sion of the 1985 Farm Bill, according to Clary. A farmer must have a conservation

or loose eligibility for most USDA benefits. CRP acreage meets the compliance aspect while paying the farmer or land-owner an annual rental payment, commented Clary.

Anyone interested in signing up for CRP should contact their county ASCS office. All USDA programs and services are available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.





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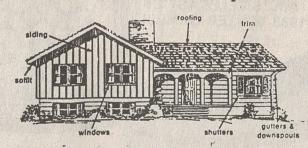
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