

Lessons Learned from a NRCS Contract: Mora Mora Farm's Experience with CSP

Background Information

OFRRF is working to increase farmer and community awareness of available federal funding for organic and transitioning farms. We interviewed Catherine Nguyen of Mora Mora Farm in Troutdale, Oregon, about her farm's experience receiving support for cover cropping through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#).

[You can read more about Mora Mora Farm](#) and how they accessed CSP funding to reduce soil compaction on their farm through cover cropping.

Catherine had a positive experience using CSP and shared her insights, advice, and lessons learned from the program. We pulled out some key takeaways—like timelines, navigating paperwork, and what to expect from NRCS—so other farmers who are interested in utilizing these federal funding programs can learn from her story.



Why CSP?

CSP is a USDA program that compensates agricultural producers committed to increasing conservation on their farms. CSP supports farmers by providing **a minimum of \$4,000 per year for a 5-year contract** to install, maintain, or improve a conservation practice on their farm. Catherine has a contract to reduce soil compaction through cover cropping. Using the program helped her bridge the gap between generating income and investing in conversation.

“It’s an incredible program. Every farmer wants to be growing food. They also want to be doing good things for the environment. But it's costly to do both.”

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Key Takeaways

Conservation Strategy: Cover Crop to Minimize Soil Compaction (E340F)

When applying to the program, applicants work with NRCS to assess resource management on their farm and select a conservation enhancement that best fits their needs.

Timeline

1. Contact NRCS

Discuss conservation goals and eligibility.

2. Register with FSA

Enter your farm into the USDA's system.

3. Make a Plan

Select your conservation enhancement.

4. Complete Paperwork

Certain documentation is required before starting.

5. Implement Your Practice

NRCS will do a site visit to your farm.

6. Receive Payment

Farmers will be reimbursed in a lump sum.

Lesson: Get into the System

Already being registered with her FSA office expedited Catherine's process. Farmers can register with their FSA office at any time, and once you're in the system, it opens the doors to many other programs.

Lesson: Start Early

Farmers can expect it to take 3 to 6 months to get their CSP contract signed. If taking an off-season, Catherine recommends farmers use that time to start the application and paperwork (which she says is very manageable!).

Consideration: Leased Land

Catherine initially experienced some difficulty accessing NRCS programs because she farms land with multiple businesses on one property. They were ultimately able to subdivide the land in the system so she could start her project.

Working with NRCS

Despite reduced staffing, Catherine found NRCS easy to work with and said she could expect a response within 48 hours. She appreciated how few administrative hoops there were to jump through, letting her focus on doing the work in the field.

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