

Agricultural Management Assistance Program

New Jersey Program Details



National Program Eligibility Requirements:

Any individual or entity interested in AMA must be an eligible applicant and control eligible land for the lifespan of the contract. Applicants are encouraged to read the document "[Applying for Federal Farm Conservation Programs](#)", which details the required forms for determining eligibility.

An eligible applicant must:

- Have an interest in an agricultural operation with an annual minimum of \$1,000 of agricultural products produced and/or sold; and
- Have an interest in the farming operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment in AMA; and
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements; and
- Be in compliance with annual Adjusted Gross Income requirements; and
- Be in compliance with provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including the provisions for sharing AMA payments on a fair and equitable basis; and
- Have control of the eligible land for the term of the proposed contract. Applications for structural or vegetative practices must include the written agreement of the landowner at the time the application is filed.

"Eligible land" means land on which agricultural commodities are produced. This includes:

- Cropland
- Hayland
- Pasture and Rangeland
- Grassland
- Land used for subsistence purposes
- Private, non-industrial forestland
- Public land under private control
- Other land on which crops or livestock are currently produced, where risk may be mitigated through operation diversification or change in resource conservation practices

Applicants must submit a completed Conservation Programs Worksheet and AMA Program Application (CCC-1200), available at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/AMA or at any USDA Service Center. They must initiate or update their farm records with the Farm Service Agency **prior to** application submittal.

NJ Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants must meet at least 3 of the 6 criteria listed below to be eligible for the program in New Jersey.

1. Average annual gross farm sales \$75,000 or less for the last three years
2. Total farm acreage of less than 50 of specialty/vegetable crops/pasture OR less than 200 of any other crops
3. USDA program payments less than \$10,000 (total) over the last five years
4. Production income more than 75% of the total household net income (for the previous full tax year)
5. Farm Operating Loan (private or government) used to support the beginning farm operation within the last 10 years
6. Rented acreage totals more than 50% of the total production acreage of the farm

National Program Requirements:

- No practice can be installed until the final contract document is approved by NRCS, unless a waiver is granted in advance by the State Conservationist.
- At least one practice must be commenced within 12 months of contract signature. If no practice has been started, the contract will be subject to termination.
- Payment rates in the approved conservation program contract are based on practice extent and not cost.
- Total payments are limited to \$50,000 per participant per year. Practices may not be split into partial projects to avoid this limit. Practices may not be completed in advance of the contract schedule if it causes a violation of this limit.
- Any payment that has or will be received from other sources (RMA or AMS) must be disclosed to NRCS.
- Conservation practices must meet the specifications of the Conservation Practice Standard for program payments to be approved.

New Jersey Special Requirements:

- Due to limited funds, New Jersey has limited contracts to a maximum of \$30,000 in federal funds.
- Contracts that include irrigation systems must also include Irrigation Water Management as an agreed-to practice.
- Management practices that are eligible for multiple payments must be contracted for three consecutive years. A payment is forfeited if the practice does not meet standards for the year scheduled, unless the State Conservationist approves a written justification request submitted in advance by the contract holder. If two years of the practice are forfeited, the contract will be in violation.

Funding:

All eligible applications are grouped for competitive ranking, generally once per year, with the highest ranked applications selected for contract development based on available funds. The ranking system addresses how well an application meets

state and national priorities, and includes a practice cost efficiency calculation. A copy of the current ranking system can be found at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/AMA or at the local USDA Service Center office.

Supporting Practices:

Practices are considered supporting practices when they are required, due to specific site conditions, to allow the efficient implementation of other approved practices under a comprehensive resource concern system. These practices may not be contracted as “stand-alone” practices in any contract.

See the 2009 Practice Catalog for more details on eligible practices.

Supporting practices in AMA include Fence, Irrigation Water Conveyance Pipeline, Livestock Watering Pipeline, and Water Well.

Payments and Payment Rates:

A copy of the current payments available, by practice, can be found at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/AMA or at the local USDA Service Center office.

Payments listed in the approved contract are based on realistic estimates of the practice amounts needed to achieve the desired resource benefit at the time of contracting. It is the responsibility of the applicant/contract holder to verify practice amounts and the estimated costs to implement.

Applicants may request higher payment rates at the time of program application by indicating on their application their eligibility for one of the following categories: **beginning farmer**, **limited resource farmer**, or **socially disadvantaged farmer**.

The specific eligibility criteria for each of these groups are found on the website <http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

The approved payment amount is based on the amount of the practice actually required and completed once the system is designed. Payments can not be adjusted for excessive costs related to contractors or materials used, or practice amounts beyond that required to address the resource concern.

If one of these special emphasis categories is selected, the applicant must file documentation to support the selection, and is subject to a review of their qualifications at any time during the contract period.

Payments are made after the NRCS technical representative has confirmed that the implementation meets the practice standard, and the contract holder has signed a request for payment (CCC-1245) generated by the NRCS office.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to verify that the increased payment rates are included in the contract prior to signing.

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