



United States
Department of Agriculture



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

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Maintain Highly Erodible Land Compliance When Corn Stover or Soybeans Are Harvested for Livestock Feed During the 2007 Crop-Year

Due to widespread drought conditions throughout North Carolina, livestock producers are experiencing poor pasture conditions and a serious shortage of hay needed for winter use. Alternatives to fill the hay shortage are being considered including corn stover, drought damaged corn and drought damaged soybeans. Care must be taken when harvesting crop residue from cropland classified as Highly Erodible Land (HEL) by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

HEL Requirements

To maintain certain USDA program benefits and eligibility, producers are required to protect HEL fields from excessive soil erosion by applying an approved conservation system. Some HEL fields have conservation systems that require the presence of specific levels of cover by plants or residue. Harvesting corn or soybean residue from such fields could leave an insufficient amount of cover on HEL fields. A lack of soil cover on those fields can jeopardize program benefits and eligibility for USDA programs, unless substitute practices are incorporated into the existing conservation system.

Substitute practices- cover crop, small grain crop in rotation

If the 2007 corn or soybean crop is taken as forage from a HEL field where maintenance of residue has been specified in an HEL plan, then planting a cover crop or small grain crop may be substituted to maintain HEL compliance in 2007. When necessary, plant cover crops prior to the latest seeding date and plant seed at rates indicated in Table 1 (back of sheet) to maintain compliance. Substitution of these approved practices into an existing conservation system does not require a variance, nor a plan revision from NRCS.

Establishing cool season crops may also aid recovery of soil moisture and provide an opportunity for limited winter grazing.

The NRCS strongly recommends using no-till planters and drills to establish cover crops and small grains this year. By minimizing soil disturbance, those implements reduce the risks of erosion, soil crusting and further loss of soil moisture.

Table 1. Cover Crop Planting Dates

Seed	Latest Planting Date		Seeding Rates
Barley	Mountains	Oct. 10	1 - 3 Bu. per acre
	Piedmont	Oct. 25	
	Coastal Plains	Oct. 30	
Crimson Clover	Mountains	Nov. 1	15 - 30 Lbs. per acre
	Piedmont	Nov. 5	
	Coastal Plains	Nov. 15	
Oats	Mountains	Oct. 10	2 - 4 Bu. per acre
	Piedmont	Oct. 25	
	Coastal Plains	Oct. 30	
Rye	Mountains	Nov. 1	1 - 3 Bu. per acre
	Piedmont	Nov. 10	
	Coastal Plains	Nov. 20	
Triticale	Mountains	Oct. 20	1 - 3 Bu. per acre
	Piedmont	Nov. 1	
	Coastal Plains	Nov. 15	
Wheat	Mountains	Oct. 20	1 - 3 Bu. per acre
	Piedmont	Nov. 1	
	Coastal Plains	Nov. 15	

Special Note- EQIP and CSP Contracts

In order to remain in compliance with EQIP Long Term No-Till contracts and CSP Soil Quality Enhancement contracts it will be necessary to have a high level of ground cover on fields under contract at the time the 2008 crop is planted. In order to meet the 80% ground cover requirements for EQIP and the 90% ground cover requirement for CSP it will be necessary to plant a cover crop on enrolled fields where corn or soybeans are harvested for forage during 2007. Establish cover crops according to the information contained in Table 1 (above).

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