Tax 18 Conservation Programs



I. Assessment Process

All taxable property in Wisconsin is assessed annually to establish a value. A municipal assessor uses market value and property inspection to complete the assessment. A value is assigned after these factors are considered.

Real estate classes

Under state law (70.32 (1-7), Wis. Stats.), a municipal assessor classifies all taxable real estate into one of the following categories:

1. Full value

Land and improvements (100%)

- Residential, commercial, manufacturing
- Other

2. Use-value

Agricultural – land only

II. Agricultural Land

- A. Valuation standard differs from other classes since its assessed value is determined by the income it will produce being used as farmland
- B. According to state law, land must be "devoted primarily to agricultural use"
- C. Includes these agricultural uses tilled land devoted to crop production, pastured land for livestock or land enrolled in certain programs
- D. Primary use must be one of the above agricultural uses

E. History

- » 1974 State constitution amended to allow non-uniform taxation of ag land
- » 1995 State law amended to create use-value law, effective January 1, 1996
- » 1996-1997 Ag land assessments frozen at 1995 values
- » 1998-2008 Use-value phase-in period
- » 1999 Farmland Advisory Council ends phase-in period
- » 2000-2003 Full use-value assessment
- » 2004-2005 Ag land assessments frozen at 2003 values
- » 2006 Use-value formula revised changes limited to annual change in equalized value
- » 2007- present Values calculated based on revised formula
- F. Intent
 - » Retain Wisconsin's family farms
 - » Protect Wisconsin's farm economy
 - » Reduce urban sprawl

Land only (100%)Productive forest land

Land only (50%)

- Undeveloped
- Agricultural forest

III. Programs and Eligibility for Use-Value Assessment

This document lists the programs and easements that can qualify as agricultural use under Chapter Tax 18.05(1)(d). There are also programs and easements that do not qualify as agricultural under Chapter Tax 18.05(1)(d). If land is enrolled in a program that is not a qualifying agricultural use, the land must be devoted primarily to an agricultural use under Chapter Tax 18.05(1) paragraphs (a), (b), or (c) to receive a use-value assessment.

IV. Tax 18.05 Definitions

Agricultural use means any of the following:

- Activities included in subsector 111 Crop Production, set forth in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), United States, 1997, published by the executive office of the president, U.S. office of management and budget
- 2. Activities included in subsector 112 Animal Production, set forth in the North American Industry Classification System, United States, 1997, published by the executive office of the president, U.S. office of management and budget. Note: Subsector 111 Crop Production and subsector 112 Animal Production, set forth in the North American Industry Classification System, United States, 1997, published by the executive office of the president, U.S. office of management and budget, are reproduced in full in the Wisconsin property assessment manual under s. 73.03 (2a), Stats. In addition, copies are on file with the department and the legislative reference bureau.
- 3. Growing Christmas trees or ginseng
- 4. Land without improvements subject to a federal or state easement or enrolled in a federal or state program if all of the following apply:
 - a. The land was in agricultural use under par. (a), (b), or (c) when it was entered into the qualifying easement or program
 - b. Qualifying easements and programs shall adhere to standards and practices provided under the January 31, 2014 No. 697 version of s. ATCP 50.04, 50.06, 50.71, 50.72, 50.83, 50.88, 50.91, 50.96, or 50.98. The Wisconsin Property Assessment Manual, authorized under s. 73.03 (2a), Stats., shall list the qualifying easements and programs according to the ATCP provisions.
 - c. 1) The terms of the temporary easement or program do not restrict the return of the land to agricultural use under par. (a), (b), or (c) after the easement or program is satisfactorily completed, or
 - 2) The terms of an easement, contract, Compatible Use Agreement or conservation plan for that specific parcel authorized an agricultural use, as defined in par. (a), (b), or (c), for that parcel in the prior year

V. Discovering Program Lands

Enrollment in Federal programs through the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) is confidential and not available to the public or assessors. The following identifies how landowners and assessors can share information for proper classification of land.

A. Landowners

An assessor may not know land is enrolled in a program or easement that qualifies for agricultural classification and use-value assessment. A landowner should contact the assessor to discuss the land, its use, and any program and easement information.

Landowner should

- 1. Contact the assessor where the property is located
- 2. Provide the assessor with available land and program or easement information:
 - a. Completed Wisconsin Department of Revenue's Agricultural Classification Conservation Program Information Request form (PR-324)
 - b. Copy of program contract or recorded easement
 - c. Property information as of enrollment date:
 - » Classification » Farm Serial Number
 - » Maps (FSN) and Common
- Farm number, tract and field number
- » Aerial photos Land Unit (CLU)
- d. Map of parcels and enrolled acres
- e. Copy of Compatible Use Authorization (CUAs)
 - » Landowners may request to conduct certain management practices through a Compatible Use Authorization including haying and grazing
 - » CUAs apply to Easement Programs only
- 3. If a landowner does not have a copy of the program contract, the landowner should contact the administering state or federal agency, complete the Authorization to Release Information form (FSA 2004) and submit to the county's United States Department of Agriculture Office
- 4. If a landowner disagrees with the assessor's classification, the appeal process is available

B. Assessors

Assessor should

- 1. Review current assessment records, classifications, available program information, and any historical information
- 2. For questionable program and easement enrollment, provide landowners with the PR-324
- 3. Make sure the land meets the following for agricultural classification:
 - a. Was in a qualifying agricultural use when entering into the easement or program (ex: if the land enrolled into a program during 2024, the January 1, 2024 assessment must be agricultural)
 - b. Is in a qualifying program or easement listed in this publication on the current assessment date (ex: January 1, 2025)
 - c. **One** of the following:
 - » Easement or program allows a return to agricultural use when the easement or program is completed
 - » Land has a Compatible Use Authorization for the prior production season that allowed for an agricultural use under (a), (b) or (c) (ex: crop production, animal production, Christmas trees, ginseng)

C. Production at time of enrollment (documentation)

Examples of what an assessor can use and landowners can provide:

- Air photo with date signs of cropping, grazing evident
- Documents identifying crop history:
 - » Form CRP 1 (USDA-FSA) farm tract and field numbers
 - » Other crop history for year enrolled agency documentation including:
 Air photos
 - County Land Conservation (LCD) farm plans

D. Agricultural program classification process

- 1. Review existing records and classifications
- 2. Conduct required annual classification reviews
- 3. Distribute PR-324 to landowners who may have land in qualifying program
- 4. Review completed form and supporting documents (ex: program contract, Compatible Use Authorization, maps, plans, air photos)

E. 2025 agricultural classification if:

- 1. Qualifying program or easement
- 2. Classified agricultural at time of program or easement enrollment
- 3. Enrolled in program or easement during 2024 production season
- 4. Continues to be enrolled in qualifying program or easement on January 1, 2025 (no improvements)

VI. Compatible Use Authorization (CUA)

An agency that administers the program or easement (e.g., NRCS, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)) can issue a CUA for the landowner to conduct certain practices on the land.

A. CUA from agency that administers program or easement will contain the following:

- 1. Landowner name
- 2. Eligible acres: may include all or part of the program acres
- 3. Time to conduct practice: when practices are allowed to occur, typically over a production season or one year
- 4. Specify practice allowed, examples:
 - a. Haying (qualifying for agricultural classification)
 - b. Grazing (qualifying for agricultural classification)
 - c. Cropping (qualifying for agricultural classification)
 - d. Brush management (not qualifying for agricultural classification)
 - e. Prescribed burn (not qualifying for agricultural classification)

B. Agricultural classification when land has a CUA

- 1. Qualifying program or easement
- 2. Classified agricultural at time of program or easement enrollment
- 3. Enrolled in program or easement during prior production season (2024 for 2025 assessment)
- 4. CUA is issued for prior production season
 - a. Qualifying CUA practice: haying, other cropping or grazing
 - b. **Note:** Land continues to qualify for agricultural classification if landowner does not implement qualifying CUA practice
- 5. Continues to be enrolled in qualifying program or easement on January 1, assessment date without improvements (January 1, 2025 for 2025 assessment)

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VII. Rollover of Program Lands

A. Rollover into a permanent easement

Land enrolled in an eligible program may rollover into another eligible program at or before the expiration of the current program. The determination of agricultural use at time of enrollment for rollover lands is dependent on the initial program enrollment.

1. Example – CRP: Land is enrolled into CRP under a 15-year contract and practices are installed according to ATCP 50 specifications. In year 14 of the <u>CRP 1 contract</u>, the NRCS enrolls the entire CRP acres into the Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE). The WRE is effective on expiration of the CRP-1.

2. Land in this example is use-value eligible if:

- WRE 30-year easements do not restrict the lands from returning back into agricultural use
- CUA applies to the WRE program lands
- · Program lands are subject to a state easement or enrolled in a federal or state program
- ATCP 50 practices are maintained

Note: After expiration of the CRP-1, all lands rolled into programs identified may need a CUA in place.

B. Rollover into a temporary easement

Lands enrolled in eligible programs may rollover into another eligible program for 30 years or less.

Land is use-value eligible if:

- Program does not restrict the lands from returning back into agricultural use
- · Program lands are subject to a state easement or enrolled in a federal or state program
- ATCP 50 practices are maintained

Note: CUAs are **not** required for temporary state or federal easements or programs. Temporary easements or programs are less than 30 years.

C. Rollover CRP to CRP

USDA FSA may re-enroll CRP lands under various sign-up programs. In these circumstances the re-establishment of the CRP-1 authorizes a use-value classification. Any land under an active CRP-1 contract is use-value eligible.

Caution: Conservation practices are subject to review by the issuing agency. Maintenance of conservation practices apply on lands under a CRP-1. Violating the conditions of the CRP-1 may result in a penalty and the removal of the lands from the program. An assessor is not notified of CRP-1 violations and should address these removals through the landowner questionnaire.

VIII. Tax 18 Conservation Programs Administered by a Federal or State Agency

A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

1. Agricultural use at time of enrollment

- NRCS does not require agricultural use at time of enrollment
- Assessors need to confirm program lands were in a qualifying agricultural use at time of enrollment for agricultural classification eligibility

2. Financial Assistance Programs

- Financial assistance programs and management programs do not determine whether land qualifies for agricultural classification
- Financial assistance programs assist the landowner in developing plans and implementing goals for the farm and the practices identified

3. Additional information

- General information
- <u>Wisconsin specific</u>
- <u>Wisconsin programs</u>

B. Farm Service Agency (FSA)

1. Agricultural use at time of enrollment

- FSA does not require agricultural use at time of enrollment for all programs
- Assessors need to confirm program lands were in a qualifying agricultural use at time of enrollment for agricultural classification eligibility

2. FSA eligible programs

- General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Sign-ups
- Grassland CRP Sign-ups
- Continuous CRP Sign-ups
 - » State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)
 - o Pollinator and Monarch Habitat
 - o Glacial Habitat Restoration Area
 - o Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Area
 - o Karner Blue Butterfly
 - o Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area

- » Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI)
- » CLEAR30
- » Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- » Other
 - o Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP)
 - Closed in 1996, replaced by EQIP

3. Each FSA program listed above is eligible for agricultural classification once these are confirmed:

- Agricultural use at time of enrollment
- Enrollment during prior production season
- Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date

4. Additional information

- General information
- Wisconsin specific
- Program information

C. United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, enhance, and manage private land to improve fish and wildlife habitats through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

1. Agricultural use at time of enrollment

- USFWS does not require agricultural use at time of enrollment
- Assessors need to confirm program lands were in a qualifying agricultural use at time of enrollment for agricultural classification eligibility

Wisconsin Department of Revenue

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2. USFWS eligible program

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

- Eligible for agricultural classification
- Temporary contract
- USFWS provides documents and contracts

3. The USFWS program listed above is eligible for agricultural classification once these are confirmed:

- · Agricultural use at time of enrollment
- Enrollment during prior production season
- Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date

4. Additional information

- General information
- <u>Wisconsin specific</u>
- Fish and Wildlife Program

D. Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

1. Agricultural use at time of enrollment

- DATCP does not require agricultural use at time of enrollment for all programs
- Assessors need to confirm program lands were in a qualifying agricultural use at time of enrollment for agricultural classification eligibility

2. Additional information

- General information
- Programs
 - » Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - » CREP Equivalent
 - » Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) for questions related to PACE, contact DATCP at (608) 224-4621

E. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

1. Agricultural use at time of enrollment

- DNR does not require agricultural use at time of enrollment
- Assessors need to confirm program lands were in a qualifying agricultural use at time of enrollment for agricultural classification eligibility

2. Additional information

- General information
- <u>Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area</u>
- Glacial Habitat Restoration
- Glacial Heritage Area
- <u>Nonpoint Source Program</u>
- Public Access Habitat
- Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area
- <u>Streambank Protection Program</u>
- Western Prairie Habitat Restoration

	Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency	
Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Closed in 1996, replaced by EQIP	FSA	
Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Conservation plan and program documents 	NRCS	
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Sign-ups Grassland CRP Sign-ups Continuous CRP Sign-ups State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Pollinator and Monarch Habitat Glacial Habitat Restoration Area Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Area Karner Blue Butterfly Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) CLEAR30 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Other Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) – closed in 1996, replaced by EQIP 10 to 15-year agreements except for CLEAR30 (30-year agreement) 	FSA	
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Contracts	 Yes Permanent easement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment (CREP requirement) Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use (CREP easements have compatible use agreements) Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 15-year agreement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment (CREP requirement) Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date Agricultural use at time of enrollment (CREP requirement) Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Establishes agricultural conservation practices Contact DATCP at (608) 224- 4632 for additional information CREP easements have provisions included equivalent to compatible use agreements 15-year agreements may be re-enrolled CREP requires agricultural use at the time of enrollment 	DATCP and FSA	

	Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency	
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Conservation practices that convert farmland to other cover for the life of the contract (5-10 years)	NRCS	
Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Technical and financial assistance for flood repair Conservation plan and program documents Farming is not restricted unless an easement is in place. See EWP-Flood Plain Easements. 	NRCS	
Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP- FPE)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Permanent Easements (see WRE) CUA, management plan and supporting documents 	NRCS	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Agricultural use must be present for use-value classification Technical and financial assistance Conservation plan and program documents Farming is allowed. Some practices may restrict farming for 2-10 years. 	NRCS	
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) (Legacy program of ALE)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Conservation plan and program documents 	NRCS	
Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)	No	Cost sharing for forestry practices	NRCS	
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	 Yes 10-year, 15-year, 20-year contract and permanent, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Qualifying agricultural use for prior production season 4. Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 15-year agreements provided for haying/ grazing Working lands program Conservation practices through a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Conservation plan/management plan and program documents Grazing and haying are the management practices See CRP Grasslands 	NRCS	

Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Technical assistance for grazing activities Conservation plan and program documents 	NRCS
Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Glacial Habitat Restoration Glacial Heritage Public Access Habitat Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Western Prairie Habitat Restoration	 Yes Temporary programs, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date Permanent programs, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Temporary and permanent programs Habitat restoration Preservation of remnant prairie Easement areas purchased by the WDNR are called habitat easements which may include cropland, forest, wetlands and uplands including remnant prairie By mutual agreement each habitat easement is subject to change Changes may include haying and grazing as management tool 	DNR
Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	No easements in Wisconsin as of 2020	 30-year contracts, 10-year agreements and permanent easements Silviculture Silviculture programs on established forest or tree planting on cropland Land may have crop history 	NRCS
Mississippi River Basin Initiative (Funding Source)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Conservation practices Conservation plan and program documents 	NRCS
National Water Quality Initiative (Funding Source)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Conservation practices Conservation plan and program documents 	NRCS
Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Erosion control	DNR

Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, enhance, and manage private land to improve fish and wildlife habitats	USFWS
Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Purchase of development rights (PDR Purchase of development rights is an encumbrance that may affect the current and future market value of the land the development rights are on, as well as the surrounding lands PACE easement requires conservation compliance through a Conservation Plan Program does not restrict agricultural use 	DATCP
Rapid Watershed Assessment (RWA)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Farming is allowed	NRCS
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Conservation program contracts and easement agreements are implemented through: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Duration: 5-10 years, 30 years and perpetual CUA, management plan (if available) and other and program documents 	NRCS
Soil and Water Resource Mgmt. Program (SWRM) 15-year agreement - CREP Equivalent (sec 50.08)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Establishes agricultural conservation practices Land enrolled in state's SWRM Program in a 15-year agreement No restrictions to return land to Tax 18 eligible agricultural use Program enrolls cropland or pasture land into a 15- year agreement CREP equivalent requires agricultural use at the time of enrollment 	DATCP

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Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency
Soil and Water Resource Mgmt. Program (SWRM) Permanent Easement - CREP Equivalent (sec 50.08)	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Establishes agricultural conservation practices CREP equivalent easements have provisions included equivalent to compatible use agreements Conservation Plan and program documents Program enrolls cropland or pasture land into a perpetual easement CREP equivalent requires agricultural use at the time of enrollment 	DATCP
Streambank Protection Program	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	Erosion control	DNR
Water Bank Program (WBP)	No Wisconsin enrollments		NRCS
Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) Former Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	 Yes 30-year easement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date Permanent easement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 30-year easements Permanent easements 	NRCS
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) (legacy program of WRE)	 Yes 30-year easement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date Permanent easement, confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Compatible use agreement for prior production season authorizing haying, grazing or other qualifying agricultural use Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Easements: 30-year and perpetual CUA, management plan (if available) and other and program documents 	NRCS

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Tax 18 Conservation Programs			
Programs	Eligible for Agricultural Classification	Program Information	Agency
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) CLOSED	 Yes Confirm: Agricultural use at time of enrollment Enrollment during prior production season Continues to be enrolled on current assessment date 	 Voluntary program to establish wildlife habitat 5-year contracts have been rolled into EQIP Conservation plan and program documents Farming allowed. Some practices may restrict farming for 2-10 years. 	NRCS