

# 2008 FARM BILL AGROFORESTRY

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**A**re you looking for a way to increase your revenue stream? Do you have other agricultural lands—crops, hay, or pastures—in addition to your woodlot? If so, you know how to manage both crops and trees. Why not put that hard-earned knowledge to work? Think agroforestry. That's right—agroforestry. What better solution to your conservation issues and needs than agroforestry, a unique land management approach that intentionally mixes woody plants and crop and animal production systems to create environmental, economic, and social benefits. What could be a better time than now to get funding for these practices?

On June 18, 2008, Congress passed the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill). This bill provides numerous opportunities for landowners to get financial support for forestry and agroforestry uses through a myriad of USDA programs—some time-tested and proven and some truly new. The federal funding programs were developed as incentives for good stewardship and to provide payment assistance for practices that, when properly designed and managed, provide a means to address pressing environmental issues. Although the Farm

Bill includes more funding programs than described in this article, the programs covered represent federal sources (Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA)) with the greatest application to agroforestry.

## **Selected Program Highlights Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

The purpose of EQIP has been expanded to include forest management. Forest management and agroforestry practices were already funded by EQIP, but this new language places an increased emphasis on enrolling forestland in this program.

## **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

Formerly known as the Conservation Security Program, CSP has been renamed and overhauled in order to be more user-friendly and to offer new conservation benefits. The new CSP significantly expands the amount of forestland that can be enrolled in the program; producers may now enroll all of the eligible forestland under their control. A number of practice enhancements are focused on forestry.

**Table 1. USDA Programs for Agroforestry\***

	Alley Cropping	Riparian Forest Buffer	Windbreak	Silvopasture	Forest Farming	Tree Planting
NRCS						
EQIP	C	C	C	C	C	C
WHIP	C	C	C	C	C	C
CSP		U	U	U	U	U
WRP		C/E		C/E	C/E	C/E
FSA						
CRP						C/R
CCRP		C/I/R	C/I/R			C/I/R
BCAP						C/I/R

*C = Cost-share payment; I = Incentive payment; R = Rental payment; E = Easement payment; U = Land use payment*

*\* Not all practice combinations or programs are available in all states and territories.*



*Silvopasture*



*Short Rotation Woody Planting*

### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP is designed to develop and improve wildlife habitat on private land, including protecting, restoring, developing, or enhancing habitat to benefit at-risk species. Only producers with agricultural land, Indian tribal land, or non-industrial private forestland can participate in WHIP.

### Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP is a land-retirement program designed to establish and improve wetland areas. Restoration of wetlands includes the planting of trees and shrubs. In some cases, WRP land may even be grazed, cut for hay, or harvested for wood products, as long as wetland values are maintained.

## HOW DOES AGROFORESTRY WORK?

### Agroforestry practices include:

Field, farmstead, and livestock **windbreaks** to protect crops, control snow or mitigate livestock odors.

**Riparian forest buffers** along streams and rivers for water quality.

**Silvopasture systems** with trees and forage growing together for dual income.

**Alley cropping** integrating annual crops with high-value trees and shrubs.

**Forest farming** where food, medicinal, and/or decorative products are grown under the protection of a managed forest canopy.

A variety of **tree plantings**, such as short-rotation woody plantings for bioenergy production.

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*Forest Farming*

## **WHAT IS THE USDA NATIONAL AGROFORESTRY CENTER?**

The USDA National Agroforestry Center (NAC) is a unique partnership of the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. NAC's mission is to accelerate the development and application of agroforestry technologies to implement land use systems that are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. To accomplish its mission, NAC interacts with a national network of partners and cooperators to conduct research, develop technologies and tools, and provide practical information to natural resource professionals and landowners throughout the nation.

## **Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)**

BCAP is a broad program designed to encourage the establishment and production of new crops, including woody biomass, for conversion to bioenergy, and to assist with the collection, harvest, storage, and transportation of these biomass crops. Eligible crops and other biomass products do not include those eligible for commodity payments under the Farm Bill's Title I, which includes invasive or noxious plants, animal waste and byproducts, food and yard waste, or algae.

## **Conservation Reserve Program**

CRP provides a continuous sign-up provision (CCRP) and also offers a number of opportunities to apply forestry and agroforestry practices on eligible acres. This land-retirement program offers annual soil rental rate payments, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and annual maintenance payments, making it very attractive.



Visit these Web sites for more information on USDA federal programs, the USDA National Agroforestry Center, and the Southern Research Station:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/)

Farm Service Agency (FSA)  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=landing/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=landing/)

National Agroforestry Center (NAC)  
[www.unl.edu/nac/](http://www.unl.edu/nac/)

Southern Research Station (SRS)  
[www.srs.fs.usda.gov/](http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/)

### YOU CAN USE AGROFORESTRY PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS TO:

- Thin a dense stand of trees for ginseng production (forest farming).
- Place trees on cropland to grow nut and timber products to diversify farm income (alley cropping).
- Develop, protect, or enhance stream corridor wildlife habitat (riparian forest buffer).
- Plant trees into grasses to improve livestock performance (silvopasture establishment).
- Improve water quality (riparian forest buffer, alley cropping, tree/shrub establishment).
- Reduce soil erosion and energy usage on cropland and farmstead sites (windbreak/shelterbelt establishment).
- Plant trees/shrubs for bioenergy use (tree/shrub establishment).



*Windbreaks*



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