

USDA Announces New Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — USDA officials are adding another dimension to helping farmers improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat in 20 counties in southeast and central Pennsylvania through the new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), expected to begin sign-ups in June.

USDA has set a goal to provide conservation benefits on 100,000 acres in Adams, Chester, Dauphin, Juniata, Montour, Schuylkill, Union, Bedford, Columbia, Franklin, Lancaster, Northumberland, Snyder, Berks, Cumberland, Fulton, Lebanon, Perry, Somerset, and York counties, with 25,000 of those acres established in buffers.

The Farm Service Agency will provide cost-share for installing conservation practices as well as land rental payments in return for not cropping the land. Cost-share is set at 50 percent with state efforts under way to increase that figure to 100 percent.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide planning, design, and installation assistance to farmers for practices such as establishing permanent grass cover, tree plantings, grass waterways, forest riparian buffers, and wetland restoration.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has provided funding to NRCS for nine wildlife

habitat specialists which will be positioned throughout the eligible counties.

"This is an excellent example of a federal and state partnership working for the health of the land and the future of a healthy ecosystem," said Janet Oertly, NRCS state conservationist. "Our employees have a history of working one-on-one with landowners to plan options which cover all the aspects of the environment-soil, water, ani-

mals, plants, air and humans. CREP provides another tool to use in that planning process."

Considerations will be given to landowner and renter relationships in these 10-to-15-year contracts which will reduce erosion, improve water quality, and provide food, water and shelter, as well as travel corridors for wildlife. USDA is partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Pennsylvania Game

Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Ducks Unlimited, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and others.

"CREP is similar to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in land eligibility and contract lengths," said Bill Baumgartner, FSA state executive director. "It is different from CRP in that land rental payments and cost-share are much higher. This program should really benefit the land

and the landowner."

CREP is a unique program sponsored jointly by USDA and the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. State officials are working to increase the cost-share amount to 100 percent. CREP is now available in 12 states, including the neighboring states of Maryland, Virginia, New York, and Ohio.

Interested landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center for more information on how to participate.

Farmer Funded Product Technologies Aim To Create New Uses For Dairy Products

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The butcher, the baker and the candy maker are all using dairy products in new ways, thanks to the dairy farmer-funded research.

"Research leads to more markets for dairy farmers' milk," said Jenny Wilson, director of communication for the American Dairy Association & Dairy Council Mid East. "Whether it's dry milk and whey ingredients used in meat and baking products or whey protein-based edible film in the confectionery industry, advances in dairy technology are creating new uses and improved functionality for dairy products throughout food manufacturing. That results in new ways to grow dairy sales

and build more demand for dairy ingredients."

Here are just a few examples of how new dairy farmer-funded research helps to increase dairy demand:

- Adding carbon dioxide to the product during packaging extends shelf life up to 75 days for cottage cheese, 35 days for fluid milk and 35 days for ice cream mix, all without the use of artificial preservatives.

- Edible films made from whey protein isolates may soon replace gloss-producing shellac on chocolate candy. Whey protein isolates applied to fruits, nuts and other foods replace synthetic materials currently used to provide oxygen, aroma and oil barriers, thereby extend-

ing shelf life.

- Whey and dry milk powders improve flavor, aroma texture and other attributes in certain meat products. Dry dairy ingredients also improve the flavor, texture, appearance and nutrition of bakery products, frozen desserts, sauces, salad dressings, snack foods, and myriad other products.

- Adjusting the cheese-making process improves the melt and stretch of lowfat mozzarella and improves the flavor, body and texture of reduced-fat Cheddar cheese.

- Adding dry milk and whey

powders to yogurt improves consistency and structure and increases total calcium and protein content.

"The new research responds to needs in the marketplace, which is really exciting," Wilson said. "Dairy farmer-funded researchers work with food manufacturers to identify areas where work is needed to produce the foods consumers need and want. Everyone benefits from working together. Dairy farmers have more markets for their milk, while consumers have more nutritious and better-tasting food choices."



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