



**CCA**  
CERTIFIED  
CROP ADVISER  
**ADVANTAGE**

# A new tool for CCAs to help clients reduce nutrient costs



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Are you working with corn farmers to implement Best Management Practices (BMP)? BMPs can improve your client's stewardship and profitability, including eligibility for incentives such as NRCS's new Conservation Security Program (CSP).

CCAs working in this arena have a new tool, thanks to American Farmland Trust. This "performance guarantee" program covers nutrient BMP and reduced tillage, providing corn farmers—and their advisors—a risk-free opportunity to try the practices on-farm. The guarantee compensates farmers for any yield and income loss they may incur while getting comfortable with the BMP.

To ensure competent implementation of the BMP, a CCA must be involved in recommending the BMP, setting up representative comparison strips and assessing yield at harvest.

For nutrient BMPs, the farmer works closely with his or her CCA to develop a nutrient management plan following university-recommended protocols for their state and region. The CCA then determines a representative location for the comparison strip considering factors such as soil-type and slope. The farmer follows the BMP on the field, and then applies his or her traditional application rate on the comparison strip. At harvest, the CCA calculates the farmer's "net-economic-returns." The program compensates farmers who fall short with a cash payment—ensuring the farmer earns at least as much revenue as if the entire field had been fertilized at the higher rate.

For reduced tillage, a CCA works with the farmer to determine the most appropriate reduced tillage system for the field, helps select the right equipment, sets out the comparison



strip and monitors performance from planting through harvest. At harvest, the CCA compares net returns, and the program compensates farmers if income suffers.

American Farmland Trust compensates CCAs for a number of these program-related services, thanks to funding from USDA NRCS, the Great Lakes Protection Fund, McKnight Foundation and others. Farmers who save dollars or increase income are also asked to contribute a small portion of those savings to support the program.

Nutrient and residue management are key components of CSP eligibility. Farmers interested in applying for CSP incentives could earn higher tier status and increased payments if they've adopted nutrient BMP's and reduced tillage practices on their entire farm. The guarantee can help by providing a safety net during the experimentation phase.

These programs are designed for farmers growing corn for grain and/or silage. For more information, please contact Regina Hirsch at (608) 873-8393 or e-mail [regina.hirsch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:regina.hirsch@sbcglobal.net).

A third tool in development covers corn rootworm IPM. Farmers' who have had their corn fields scouted the previous summer, and found beetle numbers below threshold, can follow the "no treat" recommendation without fear of income loss. For more information on this program, please contact Stan Buman, Agren Inc., at (712) 792-6248 or e-mail [stan@agren-inc.com](mailto:stan@agren-inc.com). **AG**



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