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Nitrogen Management Project Protocol V1.1

Protocol Summary

Project Definition

A reduction in the annual rate of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer applied (N rate) compared to recent application rates at the project site. Implementing additional nitrogen best management practices helps growers to enable N rate reductions, without going below crop nitrogen demand. The project activity is currently applicable to corn cropping systems only and can be located on one field or multiple fields participating as an aggregate project.

Project Eligibility Requirements

Location: North Central Region of the United States. Region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Within those states, only counties with mean annual precipitation between 600 and 1200 mm annually are eligible (see map in protocol), and no projects may be implemented on organic soils (e.g. histosols).

Eligible Cropping Systems: Rainfed continuous corn or corn rotations, but only corn crop years are creditable. All types of fertilizer (both synthetic and organic) may be applied, but only reductions in synthetic N rate are creditable. Emergency irrigation is permissible in case of severe drought, but fields may not be regularly irrigated. The project area may include both tile-drained and non-tile-drained fields.

Start Date: The first day of a new cultivation cycle (i.e. the first day after completion of the previous harvest) during which an N rate reduction project is implemented. Projects with start dates after June 27, 2010 may be submitted at any time until June 27, 2013.

Crediting Period: Five eligible (corn) crop years, over a period of up to 10 years. Crop years may be non-consecutive with a multi-crop rotation, but reporting must be continuous. The crediting period is renewable one time.

Performance Standard Test: The grower must demonstrate that the project field's RTA (i.e. ratio of N removed by crop to N applied) exceeds the average state RTA. The field-level RTA is calculated at the end of the cultivation cycle for each eligible crop year using total annual N rate for that year and average historic yield. Therefore, prior to the growing season, growers are encouraged to determine the maximum N rate at which they will meet the RTA threshold.

Legal Requirement Test: Project must exceed any N rate reductions that would have occurred as a result of compliance with federal, state or local regulations. If a Nutrient Management Plan is required by law, the field may not be eligible (see protocol for further details). Project developer or aggregator must sign the Attestation of Voluntary Implementation for each verification period.

Ecosystem Services Payment Stacking: Payment stacking is permissible, but only under certain circumstances. Fields receiving payments from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for practices other than N rate reductions under Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 590 or any other CPS are fully eligible. Project fields under contract to receive CPS 590 payments are not eligible if the contract with NRCS was signed prior to the project start date or submittal to the Reserve. However, fields receiving CPS 590 payments are eligible if the project is submitted to the Reserve concurrent to pursuing CPS 590 payments. Project fields stacking NRCS payments are only eligible to receive CRTs for the portion of the project not funded by public dollars.

Regulatory Compliance: Project must be in compliance with all relevant federal, state, and local regulations. Project developer or aggregator must sign the Attestation of Regulatory Compliance for each verification period.

Reporting and Verification Schedule: Project must report annually. Project must undergo verification for each eligible crop year, which may be non-consecutive for multi-crop rotations. Single-field projects are provided additional flexible reporting and verification options. Risk-based and random sampling is used for verification of aggregate projects.

Project Is Ineligible If:

- ⌘ Located on lands with no previous cropping history
- ⌘ Located on lands designated as highly erodible and/or wetlands
- ⌘ Management records from the past five years (or past three years of eligible crop in a rotation) are not available to set the project baseline
- ⌘ Frequency of corn crop increases due to the project



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Important Note: This is a summary of the protocol. Please read the full protocol for a complete description of project requirements.