

Climate-Smart Commodities Grant Program FAQ



What is a climate-smart commodity?

USDA defines a “climate-smart commodity” as any agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching, or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon. Adoption of these practices can produce other associated environmental benefits. Commodities broadly include more traditional agricultural crops like fruits, grains, cotton, peanuts, oilseeds, livestock, dairy, forage crops, and vegetables, as well as timber and other forestry products, and can also include other specialty, organic, or indigenous crops (USDA, 2023).

What is Regenerative Farming?

Regenerative farming goes beyond sustainability to restore ecological balance. With a core focus on soil, regenerative agriculture promotes continual improvement and healthy, thriving ecosystems.

What is the purpose of this Regenerative Climate-Smart Commodities Project?

This project intends to provide a pathway for small and underserved farmers to transition towards regenerative practices, improve their farm operations, gain access to regenerative and climate-smart markets, and become a part of a growing network of farmers committed to environmental conservation.

What types of producers are considered underserved for this project?

Underserved producers for this project are persons who fall in the following categories ([see pg. 3](#)):

- Beginning Farmers
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
- Veteran Farmers
- Limited Resource Farmers

Women farmers and specialty crop producers are generally also included in these categories
(USDA,2023).

What production commodities are eligible for the project?

Livestock: Dairy cows, Beef cattle, Sheep, Goats, and Swine

Row crops: Corn, Soybeans, Barley, Oats, Rye, Triticale, Cotton, Peanuts, Sunflowers, Potatoes, Kidney Beans, Alfalfa, Clover, Rice, and Wheat

Specialty Crops: Peas, Pumpkins, Squash, Kale, Green Beans, Beets, Carrots, and a range of Fruits

What Climate-Smart practices are covered by this project?

[Prescribed Grazing- 528](#)

[Nutrient Management- 590](#)

We may be able to accommodate other NRCS-designated climate-smart practices where expertise and resources are available.

What locations or states are eligible?

This project focuses on the Southeast Region of the United States but is also open to interested producers in other states as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, depending on the level of interest and the availability of technical assistance providers. Producers will be recruited from the states of North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

Is there a minimum or maximum acreage requirement for participation in this project?

There is no minimum or maximum acreage requirement for participation in this project however for optimum experience and performance, farms with at least 15 acres and/or a highly developed market are highly recommended.

What incentives do the producers receive for being involved in this project?

Producers can expect to receive:

- \$1,250 stipend to support time spent on climate-smart regenerative farm planning and emissions reduction plan design (with Technical Assistance from RAFI)
- Certified Regenerative Certification from A Greener World (AGW) through plan implementation auditing and validation (certification is valued at up to \$2,050)
- Assistance accessing new climate-smart markets and premiums along with customized marketing and labeling support from AGW.
- Incentive payments for infrastructure improvements averaging \$10,000 based on examination of emissions reductions and implementation of specific climate-smart practices.

Who are the partners associated with this project?

Key partners are A Greener World (AGW), Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) and Soil Health Institute (SHI).

- AGW is the project lead. AGW also administers the regenerative certification program, ensures climate-smart practice monitoring and verification, provides marketing support to participating producers, and completes evaluation.
- RAFI acts as a key collaborator to the project by conducting outreach and recruitment of producers, managing distribution of financial incentives, providing technical assistance to producers on Climate- Smart practices and planning, and supporting project implementation.
- SHI acts as an evaluation partner for the project by conducting soil testing on sample subsets of participating pilot farms to establish baselines, determining potential for soil improvements, and monitoring impact of practices used.

Supporting organizations and roles include:

- National Young Farmers Coalition aids with outreach and recruitment of beginning, small, and underserved farmers using their national membership network.
- National Co-op Grocers supports the project by assisting with marketing of climate-smart commodities by sharing information about Certified Regenerative, climate-smart products with their national network of cooperative grocery stores.

What is Certified Regenerative by AGW?

Certified Regenerative is a hard-earned badge of difference demonstrating a commitment to the environment and local communities. Certified Regenerative farms maximize soil health, while mitigating the negative impacts of humans and livestock. This includes the positive management and regeneration of soil, water, air, cropping systems, livestock, biodiversity, wild harvested resources, and people. A premise of the Certified Regenerative standards is that animals must be allowed to behave naturally and can play an important role in the nutrient cycling when raised in animal-centered farming systems.

A key part of Certified Regenerative by AGW is the Regenerative Plan. This plan, designed with support from a qualified expert, is how A Greener World assesses compliance with the Certified Regenerative standard and the farm's own goals.

What size farmers can be Certified Regenerative?

Certified Regenerative farms may be any scale as long as the standards are achieved.

Can I use the seal without being audited or inspected?

No. Use of the Certified Regenerative by AGW logo is not allowed without a successful audit of the holding and compliance with applicable policies and procedures.

What are the benefits of Certified Regenerative by AGW accreditation?

Certified Regenerative is the only regenerative certification that functions as an immediate and ongoing partnership in regeneration, facilitating mainstream market access and widespread impact. As Certified Regenerative requires Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW certification for animals, this is an additional selling point for restaurants, retailers and other market-savvy buyers.

Those who gain or seek Certified Regenerative status will also have access to AGW's valuable support services, including:

- AGW's marketing team that works to support farmers in accessing markets, branding and adding value to their product with the Certified Regenerative by AGW logo.
- Listing in the AGW online directory, frequented by thousands of consumers seeking sustainable, high-welfare meat, dairy, eggs, grains and produce.
- AGW's expert technical staff, available to support environmentally sustainable, practical and profitable regenerative and pasture-based production.

Is there a reporting requirement from the producers?

Enrolled Farmers are required to report performance changes on a quarterly basis. Farmers should submit their quarterly report by the 10th of the next month following the reporting period (i.e. reporting quarter: Jan-Mar., report due April 10th). If there are no changes in the quarter, Farmers should not complete a report but should notify the Project Manager of this information.

Can I use funds from this program in conjunction with other federal cost-share or financial incentive program funds for the same project?

Other federally funded programs not administered by the NRCS cannot be used to pay for the same practices on the same acres as this program. However, farms can receive funding to implement different practices or enhance an existing practice.

Other federally funded programs (e.g., The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)) may be used on the same acreage area for future management activities if assistance is available at the time and you qualify for those activities through the supporting agency.