



Short Season Cover Crops

The **USDA Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities Grant** was developed to help a diverse set of farmers and ranchers expand markets for agricultural commodities. Growers will get to choose from one of the six Climate Smart Practices below to trial in their operation with the support of the USDA so these practices can be observed across a variety of settings.

- USDA Climate-Smart Practices:
Climate Smart Commodities Grant**
1. **Short Season Cover Crops**
 2. Nutrient Management
 3. Residue and Tillage Management
 4. Alley Cropping
 5. Water Management
 6. Soil Amendments

The **"A Vibrant Future"** pilot project is intended to incentivize growers of specialty crops to adopt climate-smart production practices in order to establish a consumer-driven, climate-smart market for fruits and vegetables. The project is funded by the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant.

This informational fact sheet provides a brief overview of the Climate Smart Practice **Short Season Cover Crops**. These practices aim to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHGs) associated with agricultural operations and promote Carbon sequestration.

NRCS Description and code (required by USDA)

Cover crops (Ac. 340)- Grasses, legumes, and forbs planted for seasonal vegetative cover.
[For more information view Conservation Practice Standard](#)

Incentives for Growers:

Funding - Negotiated prior to enrollment and customized based on growers chosen practice and trial acreage

Up to 90% reimbursement for the direct cost of implementing climate-smart production practices (Materials, labor, testing, equipment, rentals, etc.) not to exceed \$10,000 per grower per year. Remaining 10% of direct costs associated with practice implementation will be treated as cost share with grower

Each grower will receive a modest cash incentives for the adoption of practices, and the amount will depend on the acreage committed, complexity of the practice and market value of the crop.

Technical support - provided by and through a network of partners and resources available to accommodate producer inquiries and needs

International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) conducting field days, fostering communities of practice, demonstration projects, virtual town halls, case studies, podcasts, peer-peer information sharing

Measure to Improve (MTI) providing grower support, one on one meetings, site visits, access and networking with Agronomists, PCAs, Crop Advisors, USDA researchers

Vibrant Future Grant Partners- International Fresh Produce Association, University of Florida, Data Services Provider, Measure to Improve, and Alcorn State University

Vendors provide technical support as required under program participation rules

Criteria For Participation:

Commitment -grower must commit to carry out climate smart practice during 4 year trial period and commit 50 work hours/year

Eligibility - grower must complete all required forms and establish farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency

Data Collection/Sharing- must allow access to sites for data collection and be willing to document and share practices and *data outcomes for modeling purposes

*Data will remain anonymous and aggregated without personal identifiable information

New Practice - demonstrate that the practice is new to the operation and/or site

Conservation Practice Benefits

Cover Cropping- Improves soil health, increases soil organic matter, improves water infiltration, decreases water runoff, provides erosion control, increases carbon sequestration, attracts pollinator habitat, promotes biodiversity, reduces pest pressure, and reduces compaction.

Academic Resources:

- a. Effects of Winter cover crop on Nitrogen Efficiency in CA Organic Vegetable system: [View resource here](#)
- b. Peer reviewed academic journal outlining how cover crops affect soils: [View resource here](#)
- c. Cost- benefit analysis of Winter cover crops in a few specialty crop systems: [View resource here](#)
- d. Information of cover crops potential to manage weed populations: [View resource here](#)
- e. Use of Cover Crop Mulches in a No-till Furrow-irrigated Processing Tomato Production System: [View resource here](#)

Informational Links:

IFPA Opportunities to Participate Climate Smart Practices Pilot Program [here](#)

IFPA Grower Participation Form Webpage [here](#)

USDA Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities webpage [here](#)

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