Frequently Asked Questions

Acronyms/Definitions

- Farmers for Soil Health (FSH)
- Signing Incentive Payment (SIP)
- Transition Incentive Payment (TIP)

- **DTN FSH Enrollment Site** - Farmer will create credentials to select fields and preliminary data for enrollment in the Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) and/or Transition Incentive Payment (TIP) programs.

- **DTN Document Verification Page** - Farmer will use the credentials used for enrollment to log in and input additional required information for qualification in the FSH Climate Smart Commodity (CSC) cover crop payment program.

Qualification/Eligibility

1. Does a farmer have to plant cover crops on the enrolled field for 3 consecutive years to remain eligible for the entire $50/acre?

   Yes, participating farmers must plant cover crops on the enrolled field in three consecutive years to earn the $50/acre incentive.
   *Participants will receive $25, $15, and $10 per acre in contract years one, two, and three, respectively.
   **Please note that wheat growers may opt. out of planting cover crops for any one of the three years and still receive the 2 highest payments ($25 and $15) for the years they do plant cover crops.*

2. Are farmers who have other crops in their rotations in addition to corn and soy (or instead of, like those who grow sunflowers instead of soybeans) excluded?

   The focus of this grant is to promote adoption of cover crops on farms using corn and soy in their crop rotations. We accomplish this by focusing on corn and soy farmers in our marketing, communications, and technical assistance programs, and through eligibility requirements. Thus, it is expected that row crop farmers use corn and soy in their rotations on their farm to be eligible for FSH enrollment. Additional commodity crops have been approved for the FSH programs. Importantly, the Sustainability Marketplace will only feature corn and soy commodities.

3. What happens if a farmer signs up and later is unable to continue/needs to drop out?

   Farmers are able to drop out of the program but will not receive the Transition Incentive Payments (TIPs) for the crop years in which they did not plant cover crops. We will be developing and communicating the process for a farmer to withdraw.

4. Are the cover crops allowed to be grazed with this opportunity?

   According to NRCS Cover Crop Practice Standards in most states (including Kansas) cover crops can be grazed. Further guidance is available in the General Criteria section of the Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) for your state. There may be additional guidance on timing of grazing. Technical service providers may be able to provide additional details.

5. Do different types of tillage management impact eligibility?

   Tillage management type does not impact a farmer's ability to meet the NRCS Cover Crop Practice Standard. However, gathering tillage information is necessary for the overall environmental benefit of Green House Gas (GHG) reduction for the FSH project.

   Additionally, while tillage practices do not impact farmers' eligibility to receive payments through FSH, they could impact farmers' ability to receive additional payments in the FSH marketplace from end users seeking additional sustainability attributes.

6. Does every FSH participant go through verification? What is required for verification?

   Each FSH participant will be verified remotely with satellite/remote sensing technology.

   A small subset of FSH participants will be randomly selected for further field-level verification. The farmer will be notified after random selection that their field was selected.

7. If a farmer planted cover crops last fall but the cover crop did not meet NRCS practice standards, are they eligible for TIP?

   Yes, the field would qualify for TIP.

8. What if a farmer does not have a valid email address?

   A valid email address is required to create an account and enroll, so a valid email is required to participate in the program. State TA providers can assist farmers, as needed, in creating an email account.

9. What information should a farmer have if they plan to use bin run seed for their cover crops?

   It's common for farmers to use their own saved seed, or bin run seed, as their cover crop. Farmers should be mindful that the seed is of good quality and doesn't contain foreign material. Additionally, if selected for further verification, they'll need paperwork for their cover crop seed. To qualify, the following must be completed: Complete a germination test and ensure the results are above 85%. Ideally, this is done at a seed lab, as they'll also test for and likely clean the seed of foreign material, as well as provide documentation of the germination test, helpful for verification.

10. What data is required for the enrollment site and for Document Verification Page?

- **Field info**
  - FSA Farm, Tract, and Field numbers for each field
  - Cover crop species
  - Cover crop seeding rates
  - FSA Farm, and Tract Maps
  - FSA Form 156EZ
  - Subsidiary Print for the year cost-share payment is issued
  - W-9 (EIN Number (Employer Identification Number) or SS Number (Social Security Number))
- **FSA Forms: May be requested upon verification**
  - AD 1026 - Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Certification Form
  - AD 2047 - Customer Data Worksheet
  - CCC 902 - Farm Operating Plan

This list of required enrollment documents is included on the Farmers for Soil Health and KACD web page.

11. Since enrollment is done on a field basis, will the farmer have to go through the same enrollment process in years 2 and 3 for that field?

    Since enrollment is done on a field basis and applies to the entire length of the contract (1 year for SIP and 3 years for TIP), the farmer will not be required to re-enroll TIP fields in years 2 and 3. However, farmers must reupload a current year subsidiary print for each year of their contract.

    Moreover, the farmer should ensure that their information is up-to-date in their Document Verification Page each year, including details such as the cover crop species planted, date planted, termination date, etc. DTN intends to send reminder emails to farmers to update their information each year.

12. Will enrollment be continuous, or will there be deadlines for batching, etc.?

    Enrollment will be continuous, with a cut-off period for enrollment in each year's cover crop season. For the 2024-2025 cover crop season, cut off will be February 28, 2025. We will determine the cut-off date for future cover crop seasons after the current enrollment period ends. Lastly, the final enrollment year will be 2026.

13. Should producers mark down their specific species or use the "Mix" option for a multi-species mix?

    It is recommended to use the "Mix" option in the drop down.

14. When do farmers sign a data use policy? Where can we go to see that policy?

    Upon clicking "Enroll Now", a prompt on the screen reads "By selecting Create Account, you agree to our [DTN] Terms of Service and have read and acknowledged our [DTN] Privacy Statement."

    Note: EIN or SSN information is encrypted and sent to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to enable payment processing. DTN cannot read or use your EIN or SSN. All other data will not be shared beyond the program and the marketplace is an opt-in option. See Section 1619 per NFWF below:

    "Section 1619 protected farmer data provided to DTN will be made available to NFWF for payment processing and reporting to USDA. These data will not be otherwise disclosed and will be deleted at the closure of the Farmers for Soil Health award, unless the farmer provides DTN consent to keep the data. Farmer participation in other opportunities, such as the Marketplace Platform, may be conditioned on farmer consent to data release."

15. Will the farmer be notified to update their information each year?

    Yes, farmers will receive an email from DTN to verify and update their information each year.

16. Will the farmers randomly selected for additional verification be notified of their selection and instructed on next steps?

    Yes, farmers selected for additional verification will receive an email from DTN in March notifying them of their selection and instructions on next steps. There will also be a banner in their account. There will be no hard-copy documents sent to farmers by mail.

17. Will farmers know if initial verification was completed on their farm and if they pass/failed? Who will issue their payment, and when? Who will communicate that?

    State TA providers will receive a summary of the verifications in their states. From March through May, DTN will remotely verify all enrolled fields by satellite imagery. During that time, farmers will receive an email from DTN indicating their verification or lack thereof. For farmers whose fields were verified remotely and passed, NFWF will issue their payment within 4 weeks of verification. For farmers that have not been verified successfully by satellite imagery the TA portal will be used to capture necessary documents required to verify those fields.

18. Are there instructions on how to navigate the subsidiary print process? How will that be uploaded?

    Subsidiary print is available through the FSA office and will need to be current for the year the payment will process. Either the farmer or the TA can upload this document through the TA portal.

19. What are the acreage limits for FSH enrollees?

    Producers are allowed to enroll a maximum of 1,000 acres for Transition Incentive Payments (TIP) and 200 acres for Signing Incentive Payments (SIP).

Sustainability Marketplace

20. Who is eligible to enter into the Sustainability Marketplace?

    Once launched, only FSH enrolled acres qualify for the sustainability marketplace. In the future, there may be additional programs that will coordinate with FSH and be eligible to enter into the marketplace.

Stacking

21. Can the FSH project be stacked with other public programs? State funding, federal funding (EQIP), etc.?

    Participants cannot receive federal funds from multiple sources for the same practices on the same acres (e.g. cover crop cost-share through EQIP, CSP, or RCPP and FSH) at the same time. Federal funding sources can fund different practices on the same acres at the same time.

22. If a farmer has previously enrolled in federal cost share, such as RCPP, are they eligible for the $2/dollar SIP after their RCPP contract has expired? What about for TIP?

    Participants cannot receive federal funds from multiple sources for the same purpose on the same acres (e.g. cover crop cost-share through EQIP or CSP and FSH) at the same time. If a producer previously received federal funding for cover crops, but will not any longer, they can enroll in FSH. If the producer planted cover crops in the crop year preceding FSH enrollment, they are only eligible for the Signing Incentive Payment (SIP). If the producer previously received cost share for acres cover cropped but stopped using cover crops on those acres for at least 1 year prior to FSH enrollment, they would be eligible for the Transition Incentive Payment (TIP).

General

23. What would motivate a producer to choose this over another local or federal program? If the NRCS pays >$40/acre for a four-species cover crop planting, and a SWCD can field $60/acre paid this month, how am I going to sell a producer on $20 an acre through FSH?

    FSH Partners recognize that other programs offer higher incentive payments to plant cover crops. The FSH PCSC project aims at offering a simple, understandable, and educational program that offers flexibility and local technical assistance.

    Benefits of FSH:
    - Producers can self-enroll
    - Simple, quick enrollment process
    - Access to DTN Sustainability Marketplace
    - No income verification to qualify
    - Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) option available for acres cover cropped the year prior to FSH enrollment
    - Can be stacked with other cost sharing options (see questions 31-33)
    - Limited documentation required
    - Implementation may deviate from the NRCS 340 cover crop standard. Deviations are state specific, contact your local TA for details.
    - Flexibility with cover crop species
    - Free local technical assistance

24. What if a producer starts farming new ground that had a cover crop on it with the former producer? Would that be considered a new cover crop despite what the former producer was doing? Does the designation go with the producer or the land?

    The land goes with the current producer, so this producer would qualify.

25. Also, what if they get and EQIP contract after their first year TIPS payment…. Will they have to pay the $25 back? Who will keep track of if they get an EQIP or CSP during the second or third year?

    They will not need to pay the $25/ac back. The producer should notify FSH that they no longer qualify for the FSH payment.