

**2018 HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM
INCENTIVES PROGRAM
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
MARCH 1, 2019**

1. Q. A farmer wants to put in a Conservation Cover ([USDA NRCS CPS 327](#)) on the rows between his fruit trees in his orchard and apply Mulch ([USDA NRCS CPS 484](#)) to individual trees. Will the two practices be eligible in his orchard?
A. These practices may be eligible; the actual acreage of alleyways for conservation cover and actual acreage of the bases of all fruit trees for Mulch must be clearly and correctly identified on the schematic map, work plan and budget worksheet.
2. Q. Can Conservation Crop Rotation, Mulching, and Compost Application be implemented simultaneously on the same land in perennial orchards and vineyards? How many soil samples are needed for the above practices?
A. Conservation Crop Rotation practice is only applicable to cropland where at least one annually-planted crop is included in the crop rotation. Mulching and Compost Application can be implemented together. If the two practices are applied on different locations (i.e., At least one composite soil sample per practice should be taken each time if Compost Application and Mulching are not uniformly applied to the whole field, but instead, applied at different locations (crop row vs. between rows)).
3. Q. Can a farmer plant fruit trees under Hedgerow or Silvopasture practices?
A. Planting fruit trees within the hedgerow or Silvopasture is not restricted, however, the trees must be unfertilized to be eligible for the Hedgerow Planting and Silvopasture practice.
4. Q. For the budget worksheet, the total grant amount requested cell, N155, is not taking out the funds for match amount or in-kind contribution, therefore total grant amount requested reads to exceed the \$75,000. How shall I proceed?
A. Matching funds are entered in a separate column (column O) in the budget worksheet and are not included in the grant amount requested for the project.
5. Q. Are herbaceous Cover and Woody Cover practices eligible for rangelands?
A. Herbaceous cover practices may only be implemented on cropland. Woody Cover practices that specifically have an implementation for grasslands may be applied to grasslands. Applicants must ensure to explain the project implementation and baseline conditions in detail in their application.
6. Q. For orchards with berms, do we need to apply mulch over the entire field or just the planted area (berms)?
A. Applicants may apply mulch to the entire field or only berms, as suitable to their project. Acreage must be calculated carefully for each scenario and should be reduced in case of application to berms versus whole field. For both scenarios, application of mulch must comply with [USDA NRCS CPS 484](#) standards.
7. Q. A pasture was planted 4 or more years ago. Will it be eligible for Range Planting?
A. Yes.
8. Q. For Riparian Forest Buffer, will the program allow an applicant to make preparations (putting posts for the fencing when the soil is moist) in May 2019 while holding planting until the application is awarded?

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- A. Preparation for any practice implementation prior to grant duration does not disqualify an application. However, applicants should be aware that expenses occurred prior to the grant term will not be reimbursable if the application is awarded.
9. Q. For Riparian Forest Buffer implementation, will the entire buffer and fence need to be completed by that December 31, 2019? Can planting of trees be completed in the following calendar year?
- A. Because Riparian Forest Buffer is one-time planting, a recipient may have the flexibility to complete the practice implementation in the second project year. However, because four soil organic matter testing reports (prior to practice implementation, 1, 2 and 3 years after practice implementation) are required by the program, the recipient will have to cover the cost of soil testing if it occurs outside of the grant term.
10. Q. For Riparian Forest Buffer, can we apply for both the large container planting as well and the small container planting within the same acreage to increase density and diversity of planting area?
- A. Applicant can mix plant large container plantings with small container plantings but have to divide the acreage in two portions, one for large container planting and the other for small container planting. CDFA can not fund the same practice twice on the same acreage.
11. Q. Can rice bran used for anaerobic soil disinfestation (ASD) qualify as an amendment supported by the HSP grant under mulching/natural materials?
- A. Yes, rice bran counts as a natural material under the mulching practice.
12. Q. Can growers use their own mulch from chipped trees??
- A. Yes, growers can use their own mulch from chipped trees. However, they still must apply the mulch once per year for the three years of the project duration and follow the USDA NRCS CPS rules and regulations.
13. Q. For Mulching, can mulch material be applied in the first year at high rate, and maintain in the second and third year?
- A. Mulch must be applied every year in order to achieve the correct soil coverage and thickness of mulch specified in [USDA NRCS CPS 484](#). Per the CPS, depending on the material used for mulching, there may not be a maximum thickness of mulch to be applied. Applicants must review the CPS guidance documents carefully. The amounts of mulch applied in years 2 and 3 may be lower than year 1 depending on how much mulch has degraded and is still present on the soil.
14. Q. If a mixed legumes and non-legumes cover crop is selected, how must one enter this in COMET-Planner?
- A. Once Cover crop is selected, in the right window "Conservation Practice Implementation", applicant can select "Add Legume seasonal cover crop to Irrigated Cropland."

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15. Q. The deadline for implementation is December 31, 2019. What constitutes implementation? Would collecting soil samples and preparing for the following spring activities be considered enough implementation?
- A. Implementation refers to all activities needed to complete the practice, for example, planting trees for Hedgerow and spreading compost for Compost Application, which must take place in addition to collection of soil samples and advance preparation.
16. Q. Where should farmers in San Diego County send their soils for testing?
- A. Farmers can send their soil samples to any soil analytical laboratory that uses University of California test methods. If the farmers have a different lab not on the list, but one that follows same procedures/standards, that is acceptable. Also, the farmers can drop-off or mail their soil samples to any of the approved laboratories listed in the document [Soil Sampling Protocol for Soil Organic Matter Analysis](#).
17. Q. A farmer wants to put in 3 hedgerows on one APN; Field 1, 2 and 3 will have individual hedgerows. Does he need to take soil samples from each field, even though it is one practice and one APN?
- A. If field 1, 2 and 3 conditions (cropping and management history, soil type and drainage) are different, then a sample should be taken per field. The cost for soil sampling (including analysis) will be covered by the grant money during the project duration.
18. Q. When a project includes application of compost on multiple APNs do we need to submit a screen shot of each APN using the compost ineligible tool?
- A. Yes, a screenshot is needed for each APN if the APNs are far apart. Two ways to upload the files: (1) combine all screenshots into one file to upload, or, (2) use additional file upload at the end of the application to upload each file.
19. Q. On Work Plan Template, what activities are to be listed as 'supporting implementation'?
- A. In the Work Plan Template – “support practice implementation” specifically refers to complete details on how an applicant is going to implement each practice during the grant agreement term.
20. Q. The compost provider we are working with has a “Notification Tier” permit from CalRecycle but doesn’t come up on the website map of eligible providers that CDFA listed. Can this compost be used for the project?
- A. Compost for the purpose of the HSP may be purchased from a facility in the Notification category in the Solid Waste Information System (SWIS) facility database. To locate such a facility the option “Notification” must be selected under the “Regulatory Status” category in the database.
21. Q. For Nutrient management practice, is 15% reduction in organic fertilizers eligible?
- A. Reduction in 15% synthetic N fertilizer is the only scenario currently eligible for funding under the USDA NRCS CPS 590.
22. Q. Can No-Till be implemented on grazing lands?
- A. No-till is currently eligible only for croplands.

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23. Q. Is the applicant required to pay the CDFA proposed \$50/ton for compost? If applicants obtain certified compost for a lesser price, can the applicant use extra funding to increase the amount of compost purchased through the grant?
- A. CDFA will reimburse the applicant based on the standard payment rate of the practice. If applicants incur a cost saving, they may utilize the funds for their farm as appropriate. CDFA encourages increasing the coverage of HSP practices on applicant's farm with saved funds.
24. Q. Is an HSP grant considered taxable income?
- A. CDFA is unable to advise applicants regarding taxes. Applicants must consult a professional tax consultant for assistance.
25. Q. Can an applicant submit 4 applications with separate tax IDs?
- A. Yes, however, each application should be for distinct APNs and management practices.