



AMERICAN
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NEWS RELEASE

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Certified Professionals to Serve as Technical Service Providers Under Farm Bill 2002

Agreement signed by USDA, American Society of Agronomy for Conservation Programs

MADISON, WI, FEBRUARY 6, 2003 – Certified professionals are eligible to serve as Technical Service Providers for farm conservation programs under a Memorandum of Understanding signed today in Washington, D.C., by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and the American Society of Agronomy (ASA).

Technical Service Providers will provide assistance to farmers of private lands in protecting resources through conservation planning in soil and water, nutrient, pest, and crop management. The agreement officially recognizes that a person who has met the standards of one of the four certifying programs of the American Society of Agronomy also meets the NRCS standards for providing conservation assistance. The four certifying programs of the ASA are: Certified Crop Adviser, Certified Professional Agronomist, Certified Professional Crop Scientist/Specialist, and Certified Professional Soil Scientist/Classifier.

Taking part in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding were Jim Moseley, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture; Bruce Knight, Chief, NRCS; Tom Bruulsema, Chair, Certified Crop Advisers Board; Robert Hoeft, President, American Society of Agronomy; and Luther Smith, Executive Director, Certified Crop Adviser Program.

"Those certified in one of the ASA programs have the opportunity to utilize their scientific expertise to develop management plans that are both economically and environmentally sound. They have the opportunity to help preserve natural resources while at the same time creating management systems to allow U.S. agriculture to continue to compete in the world market," said Hoeft.

Section 2701 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (The Farm Bill) requires the USDA to provide conservation technical assistance to U.S. farmers, ranchers and forest owners, and authorizes the department to approve individuals who can provide technical assistance.

"This memorandum of understanding would not have been possible were it not for the record that ASA has established of requiring all certified members prove their abilities through a strenuous application review and/or examination procedure and they maintain their expertise through continuing education," said Hoeft.

Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman announced that President Bush is proposing \$3.9 billion for conservation programs in his budget, with a portion of those funds going to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The proposed EQIP rules released on Jan. 29, 2003, include an incentive payment for the development of comprehensive nutrient management plans and NRCS will encourage producers to use the services of certified professionals to provide technical assistance.

"Producers needing assistance on their conservation plans and programs will be able to find a registry of certified professionals who serve as Technical Service Providers at USDA service centers and local conservation districts," said Smith. "The registry also will provide their area of expertise and the geographic area they serve."

This agreement will allow certified professionals the opportunity to become certified by NRCS and to be placed on the NRCS approved list of Technical Service Providers.

According to Smith, certified professionals to participate as a TSP, need to register a user ID and password. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov, click on electronic government, then click on register to print the necessary forms. Then, fax, mail, or hand deliver the notarized forms to your local USDA service center.

The Memorandum of Understanding between NRCS and ASA is effective for the next five years.

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The American Society of Agronomy (ASA) www.agronomy.org is an educational organization helping its 10,000+ members advance the discipline and practice of agronomy and related earth sciences by supporting professional growth and science policy initiatives, and by providing quality, research-based publications and a variety of member services.