

Regenerative Biofuel Feedstock Rule:

Cover Crops



Overview

USDA's Regenerative Biofuel Feedstock Rule establishes a framework to connect regenerative agriculture practices to new markets within the biofuel supply chain for corn, soybeans, sorghum, and spring canola. These standards include:

- ◆ Covered biofuel feedstock crops and participating entities throughout the supply chain;
- ◆ Field-level quantification of crop-specific carbon intensity;
- ◆ Mass balance chain-of-custody standards, including traceability and record keeping;
- ◆ Auditing and verification requirements; and
- ◆ Regenerative agriculture practice standards for covered feedstock crops.

About the Practice

- ◆ Utilizing a cover crop is an optional practice.
- ◆ Species Selection & Planting: Choose cover crop species, seeding rates, dates, depths, and methods that match local soil and site conditions.
- ◆ Leguminous Cover Crops: If using leguminous cover crops, develop a nutrient budget showing available nitrogen and adjust planned nitrogen application to the next production crop accordingly.
- ◆ Timing: Cover crops must be seeded in the fall. Interseeding into existing crops is allowed. Planting green (planting the production crop into a living cover crop) is permitted.

- ◆ Termination: Terminate cover crops by winter kill, herbicide, or non-soil disturbing mechanical methods (like roller crimper or mowing) in the spring. Residues must remain on the soil surface and cannot be burned or harvested.
- ◆ Grazing: Grazing is allowed before termination, but at least 50% of above-ground vegetation must remain, with most flattened onto the soil surface.
- ◆ Carbon Intensity Crediting: Cover crop benefits are credited to the cash crop that follows the cover crop and is harvested after a cover crop is terminated.
 - ◆ For example, if a cover crop is seeded in the fall, the CI benefits would accrue to the next spring biofuel feedstock crop.
 - ◆ If a cover crop was seeded by drone in the fall into a standing crop, the CI benefits would accrue to the next spring biofuel feedstock crop.

Record keeping

Records must be kept for 5 years and must demonstrate:

- ◆ Purchase and receipt of cover crop seed
- ◆ Field locations and acreage
- ◆ Seeding date, method, and rate
- ◆ Photographic evidence of establishment and grazing
- ◆ Termination date and method
- ◆ Bushels harvested from fields with cover crops

Records may be of varying types and origins including, but not limited to:

- ◆ Physical documentation (for example, paper forms, invoices, receipts, seed tags)
- ◆ Digital files (including from farm management software)
- ◆ Data generated by farm equipment (for example, precision agriculture equipment)
- ◆ Remotely sensed data
- ◆ Georeferenced and timestamped photographs
- ◆ Data and records used for participation in USDA programs

More Information

To learn more about USDA's technical guidelines for the production of regenerative agricultural biofuel feedstocks, visit usda.gov/technical-guidelines-regenerative-biofuel-feedstocks.

USDA's Feedstock Carbon Intensity Calculator is available at usda.gov/usda-fdcic.

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