

FARMERS: It's time to Apply for our Cover Crop Grants



Maryland's 2025-2026 Cover Crop Program

Sign-up runs June 23-July 17, 2025 at local soil conservation districts

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Maryland's 2025-2026 Cover Crop Sign-Up runs **June 23 through July 17, 2025** at local soil conservation district offices. This is your opportunity to apply for grants to help cover the cost of planting cover crops in your fields this fall to enhance soil and water quality.

This year's program has been simplified and aligned with state budget projections to support as many farmers as possible in their conservation efforts. Please read this fact sheet carefully to learn more about important changes to this year's program.

WHY COVER CROPS?

Cover crops are your first line of defense against erosion and runoff in winter. They are important to the health of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. Want to improve your soil's health? Check out this starting lineup of benefits. Cover crops:

- ✓ Recycle unused nutrients for spring cash crops
- ✓ Add organic matter to the soil
- ✓ Control weeds and pests
- ✓ Reduce soil compaction
- ✓ Protect fields from too much or too little rain

APPLY IN PERSON

Please contact your local soil conservation district to apply for our grants. Bring your completed Nutrient Management Plan Certification and IRS Form W-9.

2025-2026 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

This year's base payment is **\$35/acre**, but you can earn up to **\$65/acre** with add-on incentives for using highly valued planting practices.

2025-2026 COVER CROP PLANTING AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

TRADITIONAL COVER CROPS PAYMENT OPTIONS	NO-TILL	CONVENTIONAL	BROADCAST WITH LIGHT, MINIMUM OR VERTICAL TILLAGE	AERIAL	BROADCAST STALK CHOP AND BROADCAST CULTIPACKER
Base payment:	\$35/acre	\$35/acre	\$35/acre	\$35/acre	\$35/acre
Incorporate on or before October 10, add:	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre
Aerially seed into standing corn by October 10, add:	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$10/acre	\$0/acre
Plant rye, triticale, or a multi-species cover crop, add:	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre
MAXIMUM PAYMENT AMOUNT:	\$65/acre	\$65/acre	\$65/acre	\$60/acre	\$50/acre

Please turn over

PLANTING OPTIONS

- Plant cover crops after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco, vegetables, hemp, sunflowers, sod, or millet.
- You must plant at least 10 acres of cover crops to participate in this program.
- Total enrolled acres may not exceed acreage managed under the farm's Nutrient Management Plan.
- Direct deposit of cost-share grants is available.

SEED REQUIREMENTS

- Both homegrown and purchased seed must be tested and labeled following Maryland Seed Law and Regulations.
- Seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80%, and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.
- **NEW** If you incorporate your cover crop into the soil, you'll need to follow **NRCS recommended seeding rates**.

ELIGIBLE COVER CROP SPECIES

- **Cereal Grains** Wheat/spelt, rye, barley, triticale, oats, and ryegrass
- **Brassicas** Forage radish and canola/rape
- **Legumes** Clover, Austrian winter peas, and hairy vetch (must be planted with a cereal grain as part of a mix)

COVER CROP MIXES

Planting a cover crop mix can increase biodiversity on your farm and protect against weather extremes.

- Two-species cover crop mixes may be planted at a rate of 50% cereal grains and 50% brassicas or legumes.
- Three species mixes (50/25/25) must contain a minimum of 50% eligible cereal grains.
- **NEW** To maximize their soil health benefits, mixes containing legumes must be terminated after **May 1**. No additional incentives apply.
- A Seed Calculation Workbook is available online at **mda.maryland.gov/conservation**.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- Plant cereal grains by **November 5, 2025**. Some species have earlier deadlines.
- **NEW** Plant oats and mixes containing legumes, forage radish, or canola/rape by **October 10, 2025**.
- The aerial seeding deadline is **October 10, 2025**.
- Terminate cover crops between **March 1 and June 1, 2026**.

FALL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

- After becoming well established, eligible cover crops may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage.
- **NEW** Non-poultry manure may be applied to cover crop fields in the fall at a base payment rate of **\$25/acre**. No additional incentives apply.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

To receive payment, you must certify your cover crop with the local soil conservation district within one week of planting and by **November 12, 2025**. *In addition, all follow-up documentation must be submitted to the local SCD by December 1, 2025.*

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- You must be in good standing with the Conservation Grants Program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management requirements.
- Additional restrictions may apply.

FIND A CONTRACTOR TO PLANT YOUR COVER CROP

For a list of contractors who can plant cover crops in your fields this fall visit **mda.maryland.gov/conservation**.



Maryland
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Office of Resource Conservation

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