

# Alley Cropping

The **USDA Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities Grant** was developed to help a diverse set of farmers and ranchers expand markets for agricultural commodities. Growers will get to choose from one of the six Climate Smart Practices below to trial in their operation with the support of the USDA so these practices can be observed across a variety of settings.

**USDA Climate-Smart Practices:  
Climate Smart Commodities Grant**

1. **Alley Cropping**
2. Nutrient Management
3. Residue and Tillage Management
4. Short Season Cover Crops
5. Water Management
6. Soil Amendments

The "**A Vibrant Future**" pilot project is intended to incentivize growers of specialty crops to adopt climate-smart production practices in order to establish a consumer-driven, climate-smart market for fruits and vegetables. The project is funded by the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant.

This informational fact sheet provides a brief overview of the Climate Smart Practice **Alley Cropping**. These practices aim to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHGs) associated with agricultural operations and promote Carbon sequestration.

## **NRCS Description and code (required by USDA)**

**Alley Cropping (Ac. 311)** - Trees or shrubs are planted in sets of single or multiple rows with agronomic, horticultural crops or forages produced in the alleys between the sets of woody plants that produce additional products. Environmental assessment may be required before practice is implemented

[For more information view the Conservation Practice Standard](#)

### **Incentives for Growers:**

**Funding** - Negotiated prior to enrollment and customized based on growers chosen practice and trial acreage

Up to 90% reimbursement for the direct cost associated with the implementation of climate-smart production practices (Materials, labor, testing, equipment, rentals, etc.), not to exceed \$10,000 per grower per year

Remaining 10% of direct costs associated with practice implementation will be treated as cost share with grower

Each grower will receive a modest cash incentive, the amount will depend on the acreage committed, complexity of the practice and market value of the crop.

**Technical Support** - provided by and through a network of partners and resources available to accommodate producer inquiries and needs  
 International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) conducting field days, fostering communities of practice, demonstration projects, virtual town halls, case studies, podcasts, peer-peer information sharing  
 Measure to Improve (MTI) providing grower support, one on one meetings, site visits, access and networking with Agronomists, PCAs, Crop Advisors, USDA researchers  
 Vibrant Future Grant Partners- International Fresh Produce Association, University of Florida, Data Services Provider, Measure to Improve, and Alcorn State University  
 Vendors provide technical support as required under program participation rules

**Criteria For Participation:**

**Commitment** - grower must commit to carry out climate smart practice during 4 year trial period and commit 50 work hours/year

**Eligibility** - grower must complete all required forms and establish farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency

**Data Collection/Sharing** - must allow access to sites for data collection and be willing to document and share practices and \*data outcomes for modeling purposes

*\*data will remain anonymous and aggregated without personal identifiable information*

**New Practice** - demonstrate that the practice is new to the operation and/or site

**Conservation Practice Benefits**

**Alley Cropping** –Enhance microclimatic conditions to improve crop or forage quality and quantity, reduce surface water runoff and erosion, Improve soil health by increasing utilization and cycling of nutrients, Alter subsurface water quantity or water table depths, Enhance wildlife and beneficial insect habitat, Increase crop diversity, Decrease offsite movement of nutrients or chemicals, Increase carbon storage in plant biomass and soils, Develop renewable energy systems.

**Academic Resources:**

- a. Microclimatic changes caused by Alley cropping: [View resource here](#)
- b. Informational sheet about Alley cropping: [View resource here](#)
- c. Information sheet outlining how Alley Cropping promotes Carbon sequestration [View resource here](#)
- d. Information on selection of Companion crop selection [View resource here](#)
- e. Alley Cropping success story in France [View resource here](#)

**Informational links:**

IFPA Opportunities to Participate Climate Smart Practices Pilot Program [here](#)

IFPA Grower Participation Form Webpage [here](#)

USDA Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities webpage [here](#)

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