

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) Ranking FY2004

Maintaining Agricultural Enterprises is important to Rhode Island's environment!

RANKING CATEGORIES: *see NOTES, below*

Maximum of 10 points per category, except for Number 2, which has a maximum of 5 points

- 1) Diversification, *see Notes B and E.*
 - 10 Points Existing Diversified Operation or Organic
 - 10 Points Planning to Diversify according to business plan or transition to Organic status
 - 5 Points Existing Food Crop with Direct Sales to Customer

- 2) Business Planning, *see Notes B and E.*
 - 5 Pts Has or is in process of developing a Business Plan

- 3) Wildlife Damage to Crops, *see Note E.*
 - 5 Pts. Crop yields reduced from wildlife damage
 - 5 Pts. Tried alternative methods to control wildlife but were not successful
 - 5 Pts. Cannot hunt due to urban environment

- 4) Environmental Protection/Improvement *see NOTE A., C. & E.*
 - 1 pt. Non Highly Erodible Perennial crop to Perennial crop seeding
 - 4 pts. Highly Erodible Land Perennial crop to Perennial crop seeding
 - 5 pts. Non Highly Erodible Annually Tilled Crop to Perennial crop seeding
 - 10 pts. Highly Erodible Land Annually Tilled Crop to Perennial crop seeding

 - 5 pts. Address erosion problem using structural or vegetative practices
 - 1 pt. Subsurface drain to improve plant health in existing crop fields
(points will not be granted to alter hydrology in a wetland)

 - 5 pts. Improve existing irrigation system: water and/or energy conservation
 - 10 pts. Improve existing irrigation system by converting to trickle or drip
 - 10 pts. Trickle system currently in place on farm for all crops conducive to microirrigation

 - 10 pts. Buffer planting that meets NRCS standard
 - 5 pts. Plant trees or shrubs for other than water quality problems (e.g., odor control, aesthetics, neighbor relations)

 - 5 pts. Sustainable Grazing system planned (average of 1 AU/acre grazed) or reclaim old upland hay fields (no points if reclaiming wet pastures)

 - 5 pts. New or improved nutrient management plan
 - 5 pts. New or improved water management plan
 - 10 pts. New or improved integrated pest management system

- 5 pts. Improve soil quality through organic amendments, crop rotations, cover crops or other means
- 5) Water Management *see NOTE D and E..*
- 10 pts. New irrigation system for existing crops.
 5 pts. New irrigation system to diversify according to written business plan.
 5 pts. New or improved water source – (wells and ponds only)
 (No points will be given to establish new stream withdrawals)
- 6) Limited Resource Producer
 3 pts. Applicant meets criteria as limited resource producer.

GOALS OF THE AMA RANKING:

- I. Simply evaluate Rhode Island Agricultural Enterprises for the level that they meet AMA goals.
 II. Do not discriminate on the basis of farm size or income - do not take number acres or amounts of environmental protection into consideration (see EQIP for these).

NOTES:

- A. All practices in the RI NRCS Technical Guide are eligible.
 B. Categories 1), 2) & 3), above, do NOT rank practices; they rank the operation/market risk to remain a viable Rhode Island Agricultural Enterprise. Organic farming is a clearly stated goal of the AMA program and thus is recognized, nationally, to be of special importance in reducing agricultural enterprise risk. The practices that the farmer selects are recognized as those that are necessary to maintain or improve viability of the enterprise (according to the farmer). For Diversification, farmers must have more than one type of crop or livestock operation commonly seen in RI, or combination of both, to get points. For example, vegetable farms with a farm stand will not get 10 points in this category unless they also operate a CSA, raise livestock, have nursery stock, etc.
 C. Category 4), above, is a generic ranking of the environmental effects of the NRCS Technical Guide practices that the farmer is planning to implement in order to maintain or improve the Agricultural Enterprise. If these practices happen to address an accumulation of environmental improvement points, the maximum possible is still 10. The AMA is not strictly an environmental program - see EQIP for these.
 D. Category 5), above, gives points for "desirability" for Rhode Island for water management practices that are listed as AMA program goals. The environmental effects of these practices are rated in category 4).
 E. Professional judgement is used in AMA ranking. If a "special circumstance" exists in the RANKING CATEGORIES, points can be added or subtracted from the affected category accordingly - likely a rare occurrence.
 F. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED AT THE TIME OF RANKING:
 1) A signed conservation plan.
 2) Copy of business plan if points are to be given, where noted.
 3) Copy of Limited Resource Producer worksheet, if applicable.
 4) Signed statement from the applicant describing nature and duration of crop damage from deer, and past steps taken to prevent damage.
 5) Documentation of total irrigation needs (NRCS will aid producer in calculating needs)