

# Strip Cropping



Strip cropping is one of the least costly measures available to farmers to reduce erosion.

## What

**Strip cropping is the planting and growing of alternating strips of erosion-resistant crops with strips of erosion-prone annual crops.** The strips are systematically arranged across a field as close to the contour as possible. Strips are sized to accommodate multiple or full-width passes with tilling, seeding, harvesting or other equipment and are usually of equal width. Erosion-resistant crops such as legumes and hay and erosion-prone annual crops such as corn for silage can be used.

## Why

**Strip cropping can improve crop yields by encouraging infiltration and thereby increasing soil moisture.** Strip cropping is one of the least costly measures available to farmers to reduce sheet and rill erosion.

By helping to keep soil in place, strip cropping protects water quality and with it aquatic habitats. Strip cropping is also visually appealing and enhances the attractiveness of the agricultural landscape.

## How

**Strip crops can be established on a variety of crop fields** and managed to suit the field conditions. A rotation plan for the strips should balance the goals of controlling erosion, protecting soil health, and maximizing crop yields.

Choose a strip width based on the slope of the field and its soil types. Federal and State Agency professionals can help farmers choose a width based on erosion prediction technology. Also consider the widths and turning radii of the equipment which will be used on the field. A width accommodating some multiple of full-width passes along the strip will be the most efficient. If possible, run strips square to fence lines or other barriers. Some smoothing of sediment at the interface of strip edges may be occasionally necessary.

## Costs

Costs associated with strip cropping are similar to those for a farm's field preparation and planting rates.

### Associated and Complimentary Practices

- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Conservation Tillage
- Cover Cropping
- Nutrient Management

### Benefits

