

## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Frequently Asked Questions

### What is RCPP?

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is an initiative of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which allows partnership efforts to apply for a dedicated pot of conservation program funding. Money awarded through RCPP goes directly to farmers through the traditional NRCS enrollment process, but farmers who apply to the RCPP may be more likely to receive funding because they are competing in smaller pool of applicants. Farmers benefit from the technical and financial support to initiate or expand conservation practices on their operation.

### Who are the project partners?

Project partners include Environmental Defense Fund, Smithfield Hog Production Division, NC Soy Growers Association, NC Pork Council, NC Small Grains Growers, NC Corn Growers, NC State University, and the University of North Carolina.

### What is Smithfield Agronomics (SmithfieldGro)?

SmithfieldGro is a program begun by Smithfield Hog Production Division and Environmental Defense Fund to assist grain farmers improve their productivity, profitability, and sustainability. The program provides free agronomic advice and other services to interested grain growers who are using commercial fertilizer as a primary source of nitrogen. Priority practices include the efficient use of commercial nitrogen fertilizer, cover crops, and conservation tillage. Farmers are not required to sell their grain to Smithfield to participate.

### Who is eligible to participate?

Grain growers in Pitt, Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, Duplin, Sampson, and Robeson Counties are encouraged to enquire at their local NRCS office.

### What practices are eligible for funding?

EQIP practices eligible for funding are: Nutrient Management Conservation Activity Plan (104), Conservation Cover (327), Conservation Crop Rotation (328), Residue & Tillage Management – No Till (329), Cover Crop (340), and Nutrient Management (590).

### How many producers are participating?

In 2016, the program received 35 applications for a total request of \$940,000. Cover crops were by far the most popular practice, with 34 out of 35 applicants requesting it, many times in combination with other practices (conservation crop rotation, residue & tillage management, and nutrient management). The applicant pool also included applications from new and beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers. While the SmithfieldGRO pool was not enough to fund all applicants, all producers interested were funded through the RCPP or general EQIP funds.

### How can farmers apply?

Interested farmers should go to their local NRCS to submit an EQIP application, and specify that they want to be screened and ranked for the SmithfieldGro RCPP fund. **For more information:**

Farmers interested in participating in the SmithfieldGro RCPP:

Dawn Williamson, Smithfield Hog Production, [dwilliamson@smithfield.com](mailto:dwilliamson@smithfield.com) or (910) 385-6186

Others interested in learning more about the project:

Shelby Shelton, Environmental Defense Fund, [sshelton@edf.org](mailto:sshelton@edf.org) or (919) 881-2917