

### 4.2.3 CONTOUR FARMING

#### *A. Applicability*

This BMP applies to agricultural users where crops are irrigated on moderately sloping lands.

#### *B. Description*

Contour farming is the practice of tillage, planting and other farming operations performed on or near the contour of the field slope. This method is most effective on slopes between two (2) and ten (10) percent. Tillage and planting operation follows the contour line to promote positive row drainage and reduce ponding.

#### *C. Implementation*

The steps necessary for implementing contour farming are

- 1) Topographic survey of field.
- 2) Layout of a baseline contour with markers, an untilled crop row paralleling the contour, or other method of marking a baseline contour.
- 3) Prepare field borders to allow room for farm implements to turn.
- 4) Perform all farming activities parallel to baseline contour(s).

#### *D. Schedule*

Contour farming can be implemented at the time the field is being prepared for farming.

#### *E. Scope*

Minimum and maximum row grade, ridge height, slope lengths and stable outlets must be determined. Obstruction removal and changes in field boundaries and shape should be considered to improve the effectiveness of the practice and ease of farming operations. Agricultural operations with slopes exceeding 10 percent will find this practice less effective. Rolling topography having a high degree of slope irregularity is not well suited to contour farming.

#### *F. Documentation*

Specifications for this BMP shall be recorded using specification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements or other acceptable documentation.

#### *G. Determination of Water Savings*

The amount of water savings resulting from implementing contour farming is site specific and dependent on how the field was previously farmed and irrigated.

### ***H. Cost-Effectiveness Considerations***

The cost for preparing contour rows as compared to conventional rows is minimal. The primary cost per acre for contour farming is for the field layout and surveying of the contours. The cost for surveying varies from \$1 to \$3 per acre. Secondary costs for contour farming may include additional farming and harvesting costs for small row lengths in corners and ends of the field.

### ***I. References for Additional Information***

- 1) *Conservation Practice Standard, Contour Farming (Acre)*, Natural Resources Conservation Service, February 2000, NRCS, NHCP Code 330.