

NRCS provides Cost-Share for “Sweeping of Sugarcane Residue”

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Burning of sugarcane residue is often the farmer standard practice citing the potential negative impact of residue on crop emergence, consequently yield as well as sugar content. But, crop residue left on the surface has shown to provide weed control, minimizing soil erosion and nutrient losses. Sweeping, mechanical removal of residue from rows to row middles, is one of the residue management practices that could be implemented in sugarcane production system instead of burning the sugarcane residue¹. Research conducted by the LSU AgCenter specialists on sweeping of residue from top of cane rows showed minimal soil loss from surface, minimal damage to cane stubble, and no significant difference in yields as well as sugar content.

Using these results, Natural Resources Conservation Practice (NRCS) in 2019 has included **Sweeping for no-burn in Sugarcane** as an allowable residue management practice in Louisiana. The practice is included in the *Residue and Tillage Management category*, **practice code 345**. Farmers implementing the Sweeping practice must address one of the following

- a. Prevention of soil erosion
- b. Improvement to water quality – either to address sediments in water, nutrients or pesticides in water
- c. Soil health improvement in general

Farmers can receive \$11.3 per acre for three-years as cost-share assistance through EQIP while implementing this practice. Whereas, historically underserved (HU) farmers can receive \$13.6 per acre for three-years. Similar eligibility rules apply for “sweeping” as any other management practice. Only fields that include Sweeping as a new practice will be eligible for payment. In other words, the field should have a *meaningful and measurable improvement* in the conservation method.

Below table presents one such example:

Field #	Current practice	New practice	Eligible for payment
Field A	Burn residue	Sweep for no-burn	Yes; \$11.3/acre or \$13.6/acre (HU farmer)
Field B	Sweep for no-burn	Sweep for no-burn (continuing the practice)	No

Questions and comments:

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¹ Selim, M., and B. Tubana. 2017. Sugarcane Residue Management: Influence of a Modified Sweeper on Yields. Final report to NRCS.