COVER CROPPING

Please note: ***If your project involves seeding perennials, please refer to either the Nitrogen Management — Fertilizers BMP or the Rotational Grazing BMP project categories.***

The RDAR On-Farm Climate Action Fund (OFCAF) program supports the adoption of new Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that use regionally appropriate crops to provide additional soil cover with living roots through the winter, maintaining a minimum of 6 inches (15 cm) of cover crop cover. The purpose of cover crops is to improve soil health (organic matter and nutrient cycling) while reducing erosion risk. Other related benefits include retaining soil nutrients to prevent losses, reducing the risk of waterlogging for soils subject to spring flooding, and increasing forage or grazing opportunities.

Applicants may receive a maximum of $100,000 in OFCAF funding from all delivery partners across all BMP categories between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2028. The minimum eligible project cost is $10,000 per application. Approved eligible expenditures are reimbursed at up to 85%, subject to applicable cost limits and the applicant's remaining OFCAF maximum.

For the 2027-2028 OFCAF program activities must:

- Have project start dates on or after 1 April 2027
- Be completed no later than 1 December 2027
- Have total eligible application costs of at least $10,000
- Meet all eligibility requirements listed in the current OFCAF Program Guide and below

Planned activities must go beyond routine practices for your farm or fields. The BMPs supported by OFCAF must be new to your farm or field. If the same BMP category was previously funded on the same Legal Land Description (LLD), it is ineligible. Applicants may request funding to support eligible practices listed in the current OFCAF Program Guide. Please outline how you will apply the new practices on your farm using the BMP Action Plan on page 4 of this document, including labelled maps that show legal land descriptions (LLDs), project areas and field boundaries on an aerial photo or imagery. Any method of outlining and labelling can be used, as long as the fields are visible beneath. The Guide to Locating and Labelling BMP Action Plans provides further details. Your completed BMP Action Plan must be recommended by a qualified third-party adviser who is a Professional Agrologist (PAg) or a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA); please refer to the Guide to Accessing Agricultural Recommendations in Alberta. Your BMP Action Plan must be approved **in writing** by RDAR to be eligible for OFCAF funding.

Important Notes:

- Invoices and proof of payment must be on or after 1 April 2027
- You must receive RDAR's written approval of your application, confirm participation and accept implementation responsibilities before funding is considered active
- A project start date and a project completion date must be submitted within 14 days of written approval from RDAR. Funds may be reallocated to other applicants if the project is not accepted through the Pending Project Acceptance process in Agriculture Research Grant Organizer (ARGO).
- All paid invoices with photos, LLDs of pre-approved project fields and proof of payment must be submitted within 45 days of the project completion date, and no later than 15 January 2028
- Projects must be completed between 1 April 2027 and the applicant's project completion date, which must be no later than 1 December 2027.

In addition:

- Photographs with date stamps and GPS coordinates are required to document conditions before and after completing your project
- Applications for the purchase of drones to broadcast seed require extra documentation; see Section 5 (page 4) and Appendix (pages 5-8). Purchase of drones alone is not eligible for reimbursement, applicants must implement the BMP that coincides with the application.

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GUIDELINES AND ELIGIBLE COSTS - GENERAL

- Cover crops can be seeded with an annual crop, interseeded into an annual crop, or seeded following the harvest of an annual crop
- Cover crops must be seeded by 15 September to allow sufficient growth before winter and to have a living root until freeze-up (e.g., winter cereals, annual ryegrass, turnip, brassica)
- If harvested or grazed, regrowth needs to retain at least 6 inches (15 cm) over winter
- Clover may also be included as part of a perennial legume mix with a maximum of 50% clover; please see the OFCAF Nitrogen Management – Fertilizers BMP category
- Applies only to fields currently in annual crop rotation
- The BMP must be new to the field section. Previously funded OFCAF projects on fields within the same field section are not considered new to the field
- Purchased seed is eligible to a maximum of $85/ac
- Custom seeding [1] by a third-party operator or equipment rentals (for project area only, lease-to-purchase arrangements are not eligible)

INELIGIBLE COSTS - GENERAL

- Costs associated with fertilizer, crop protection or termination of the cover crop (mechanical or chemical)
- Crops that will be harvested as a marketable grain crop in the following year (e.g. harvested seed)
- Crop species seeded in spring for annual forage (e.g. corn, silage, greenfeed) or grazing (e.g., spring cereals)
- Biological products, e.g., inoculants
- Costs related to rejuvenating existing forages, pastures, hayland, or the breaking of pasture or hayland to seed a crop.
- Annual crop regrowth
- Total eligible costs less than $10,000 per application

Cover Cropping with Drones– Quick Facts

- Maximum drone reimbursement: 50% up to $30,000
- Minimum area to be seeded: 80 acres
- Seed cost limit: $85/ac
- Drone must be purchased (not leased) with a spreader package
- A Transport Canada pilot certificate appropriate to the drone (a Pilot Certificate – Advanced Operations if the maximum take-off weight (MTOW), including payload, exceeds 25 kg) and evidence of the drone's Transport Canada Safety Assurance Declaration must be provided before approval. Applicants may submit an application before obtaining these
- A Special Flight Operations Certificate for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (SFOC-RPAS) is needed only for operations outside the advanced-operation rules, such as drones with an MTOW over 150 kg
- Video and GPS-stamped photos required for the final report

[1] Eligible custom rate range for seeding: up to $30/ac for drill or direct seeding; up to $12/ac for broadcast or drone seeding. Rates were adapted from the 2022 – 2023 Farm Machinery Custom and Rental Rate Guide. Saskatchewan Agriculture. Saskatchewan.ca/agriculture; and Alberta Custom Rates 2017 Custom Rates 2017 – Seeding | Alberta.ca

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ELIGIBLE COSTS - DRONES

- Purchase of a new drone and spreader attachment for broadcast cover crop seeding through an authorized dealer
- The applicant must also be applying to seed a minimum of 80 acres of cover crop
- The cost share for a drone used to seed cover crops is 50%, to a maximum reimbursement of $30,000

ELIGIBLE COSTS – DRONES (continued)

- Before approval, the applicant must provide: (a) a Transport Canada pilot certificate appropriate to the drone and the proposed operation (a Pilot Certificate – Advanced Operations is required for any drone with a maximum take-off weight (MTOW), including payload, of more than 25 kg); and (b) evidence that the drone model has the Transport Canada Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) Safety Assurance Declaration that applies to the proposed operation. A Special Flight Operations Certificate (SFOC-RPAS) is required only where the proposed operation falls outside the basic, advanced, or Level 1 Complex operation rules, for example a drone with an MTOW over 150 kg, or an operation carrying a dangerous or hazardous payload. Applicants are responsible for confirming their regulatory requirements with Transport Canada.
- Standard power supplies and batteries (up to 3) for drones are included in the base package.
- The cost of a base station is an eligible expense; however, it will be included within the maximum drone cost share of 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum reimbursement of $30,000
- A maximum of one drone purchase is eligible across all program years (2026-2028)

INELIGIBLE COSTS - DRONES

- Leasing costs of a drone and/or supporting equipment
- Drones purchased without a spreader package
- Drone registration fees and pilot certification fees
- Costs associated with subscriptions, including base station subscription fees
- SFOC-RPAS issuance fees
- Total eligible costs less than $10,000 per application

Note: The drone purchase will not be eligible for reimbursement if the cover crop is not seeded or if an eligible seed invoice and proof of payment are not provided.

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COVER CROPPING - BMP ACTION PLAN

Please note: all costs must exclude GST. Use extra forms to add information and identify individual fields as needed.

Applicant Name:							
New BMP Objective – Check or fill (Y/N)							
Soil health improvement	**Increased grazing***	**Increased forage***	**Erosion control**	**Other** (describe):**			
Planned seeding dates (mo/yr):		**Overwinter cover at least 6" (15 cm)***	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐			
Is BMP new to the field (quarter section)?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐	**Are BMPs new to the farm?**	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐		

Field	**Seeded Area**	**Confirm Field Currently in Annual Crop**	**Seed Mix**	**Seed Cost (maximum of $85/ac)**	**Seeding Method*** **	**Cost of Seeding Method*** **	**Cost per Field**
(LLD)	**(ac)**	**(Y or N)**	**(type)**	**($/ac)**	**(type)**	**($/ac)**	**($)**
Total		**A) Total Cost of Seed, Custom Application or Equipment Rental**					**$**
						B) Cost of Drone^	**$**

Describe the cover crop termination plan^^:					
Is this BMP action plan recommended by a Professional Agrologist (PAg) or Certified Crop Advisor (CCA)?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐	**Have you included a labelled map of your project?**	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Name:	**PAg and/or CCA number:**		**Phone number:**	**Date:**	
			Email:		
			C) Cost of Other and/or PAg or CCA costs**	**$**	
			Total Cost of Project (A+B+C)	**$**	

*Growth of 6 inches (15 cm) must remain overwinter for erosion control. **May include the cost of BMP Action Plan recommendation of up to 10% of the total project cost, to a maximum of $2,000 per Applicant (total over all years of OFCAF program). ***Eligible custom rates for drill or direct seeding: up to $30/ac; for broadcast or drone seeding: up to $12/ac. In-kind labour and lease or rent-to-own arrangements are not eligible costs. ^Complete Appendix (pages 5-9) and seed a minimum of 80 ac. ^^Chemical and mechanical termination costs are not eligible.

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Appendix: Cover Cropping with Drone Application

Drones or Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)

Transport Canada regulates drone registration and pilot certification through the Drone Management Portal.
Drone pilots must follow specific rules for each type of operation, as well as the basic safety rules that apply to all drones.

Eligibility Checklist

	Yes	No
I have read Transport Canada's drone regulations. Drone pilots must follow specific rules for each type of operation, as well as the basic safety rules that apply to all drones.	☐	☐
I will hold a valid Transport Canada pilot certificate appropriate to the drone and the proposed operation, and will provide it before approval. If the drone's maximum take-off weight (MTOW), including payload, exceeds 25 kg, I will hold a Pilot Certificate – Advanced Operations, and the model will have the applicable Transport Canada Safety Assurance Declaration. If my operation requires a Special Flight Operations Certificate (SFOC-RPAS), I will obtain it and provide it before approval.	☐	☐
The drone registration number must be clearly marked on the drone and documented in the Final Report with a supporting photograph.	☐	☐
I understand that leasing a drone is not an eligible expense.	☐	☐
I agree to a site inspection to see the drone and the seeded cover crop field.	☐	☐
I understand that I must also apply for a minimum of 80 acres of cover crop seed, as per the terms and conditions. If I do not seed the cover crop, the drone will not be eligible.	☐	☐
I understand that I will need to submit eligible invoices and proof of payment for the seed purchased for this project to qualify for drone reimbursement.	☐	☐
I will submit a video and GPS-stamped pictures of the cover crop being seeded by the drone. This is a requirement for the Final Report to be eligible for reimbursement.	☐	☐
I understand that the cost share for a drone used to seed cover crops is 50% up to a maximum reimbursement of $30,000.	☐	☐

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Please describe using a minimum of 50 words:

1. The drone manufacturer, model and specs, including the maximum take-off weight for spreading cover crop seed, with a full payload, and the Transport Canada Safety Assurance Declaration that applies to your proposed operation (attach evidence).

2. Your seeding plan with the drone (number of species in the cover crop, seeding rate, time of application).

3. How do you plan to seed multiple seed sizes with the drone?

4. How many passes will you be making to seed the cover crop?

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Regulatory Warning — Spray Drones in Canada

This section explains your legal responsibilities and confirms that RDAR does not authorize or assume liability for drone use.

⚠ STOP — READ BEFORE YOU APPLY

- Drone spraying of pesticides is illegal unless the product label specifically says “aerial application use”. Using pesticides off-label violates the Pest Control Products Act.
- This application does not authorize unapproved spraying.
- You must comply with Transport Canada rules for drone operation and any provincial/territorial pesticide-applicator requirements.
- Carrying a dangerous or hazardous payload is a high-complexity operation that requires an SFOC-RPAS. Confirm with Transport Canada whether the product you will carry falls into this category. Pesticide label, provincial pesticide-applicator, and aerial application rules apply separately.

Terms & Conditions Drone (RPAS) Compliance, Release & Indemnity

Compliance, Prohibited Uses, Assumption of Risk, Release and Indemnity for Drone Use)

1. **Compliance With Law and Labels.** The Applicant represents, warrants, and covenants that it will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and permits relating to the operation of drones (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, “Drone ”) and the use and application of pest control products, including the Pest Control Products Act (Canada) and related regulations. Without limiting the foregoing, the Applicant shall not use any drone to apply a pesticide unless the current, Health Canada-approved product label expressly authorizes application by “Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS)” or “drone,” and the Applicant follows all label directions, limitations and drift-mitigation requirements. Use of a pesticide contrary to label directions is illegal.
2. **No Authorization or Endorsement.** RDAR and AAFC do not authorize, endorse, permit, or encourage the use of drones for any off-label or unapproved pesticide application. Funding, equipment support, or participation in any program or project under this application must not be construed as authorization for unapproved pesticide uses.
3. **Assumption of Risk.** The Applicant acknowledges that any off-label, unapproved, or otherwise non-compliant use of drones for pesticide application may pose safety, environmental, market-access, and legal risks, including potential fines or enforcement action, and voluntarily assumes all such risks.
4. **Release and Hold-Harmless.** To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Applicant releases and forever discharges RDAR, AAFC, and their respective directors, officers, employees, agents, contractors, and funders (collectively, the “Released Parties”) from any and all claims, losses, liabilities, penalties, damages, costs, and expenses arising from or relating to the Applicant’s (or its personnel’s or contractors’) use or misuse of drones, including any unapproved or off-label pesticide application or other non-compliant activity. For clarity, nothing in this Release limits liability for a Released Party’s gross negligence or wilful misconduct.
5. **Indemnity.** The Applicant shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties from and against all claims, demands, actions, losses, fines, penalties, liabilities, damages and costs (including reasonable legal fees) arising from or relating to: (a) the Applicant’s breach of this Agreement; (b) any drone operation; (c) any pesticide application; or (d) any regulatory non-compliance, including off-label pesticide use and violations under the Pest Control Products Act.
6. **Certification & Records**. Upon request, the Applicant will promptly provide evidence of (a) valid drone registration and pilot certification under Transport Canada rules, the applicable Safety Assurance Declaration, and, where required, an SFOC-RPAS; and (b) for any pesticide application by drone, the specific product label authorizing drone use and records demonstrating compliance with label directions and any applicable provincial or territorial requirements.
7. **Breach; Remedies**. Any breach of this clause is grounds for immediate rejection, termination, or repayment of funding or equipment support (as applicable), and may be reported to the relevant authorities.

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APPLICANT ATTESTATION

☐ Label Compliance. I will not use drones to apply any pesticide unless the product label expressly authorizes drone use and I follow the label directions in full.

☐ No Off-Label Use. I understand that off-label drone spraying is illegal under the Pest Control Products Act.

☐ Transport Canada Compliance. I will maintain the required drone registration and pilot certification, the applicable Safety Assurance Declaration, and, where required, an SFOC-RPAS, and provide proof upon request.

By signing below, the Applicant acknowledges and agrees to the above.

Authorized Signatory Name:	
Title:	
Organization:	

Signature: Date:

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Map on an aerial photo or image showing the project fields, legal land locations, and field boundaries. Any method of outlining and labelling fields may be used as long as the fields are visible beneath. Further details are available in A Guide to Locating and Labelling BMP Action Plans.

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