COMET QUARTERLY

COMET-Farm Newsletter

USDA Photo by Regis Lefebure

USDA Seeks Public Comment on Update to Methods for Entity-Scale Inventory Report

The Federal Registry released a request for public comment on the 2023 Technical Guidelines for Quantifying Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions and Carbon Sequestration at the Entity-Scale for Agriculture and Forestry (aka the Blue Book!). This update adds new entity-scale methods, improves existing methods and report usability, and will inform updates and functionality of the COMET-Tools.

Upon public comment and expert review, COMET-Farm will implement the updated entity-scale methods into the tool in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. **Comments will be accepted until 11:59 P.M EST on July 10, 2023.**

VIEW ENTITY-SCALE INVENTORY REPORT

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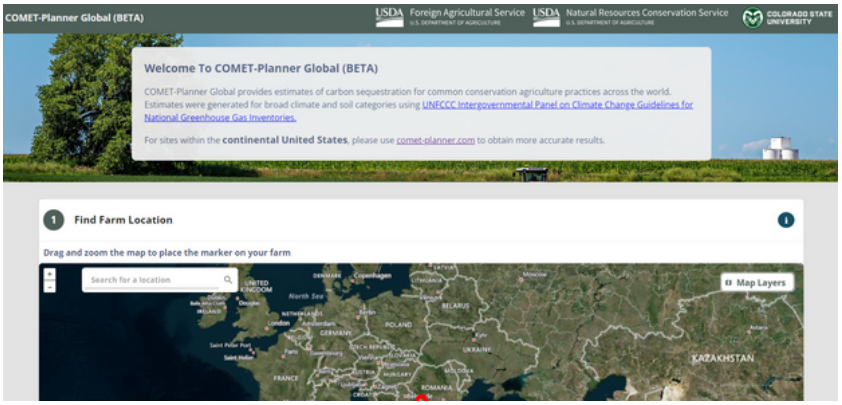
COMET-Planner Global



On May 8, USDA Secretary Vilsack announced the release of COMET-Planner Global. Included in the International Climate Hub portal, the COMET-Planner Global Assessment Tool allows land managers around the world to estimate the current and potential greenhouse gas mitigation and carbon sequestration benefits of agricultural conservation practices. Using IPCC Tier 1 methodologies, the tool allows for five quick steps to develop an estimation: find a farm location, select a farm type, select current land use, select a conservation practice, and enter field size. The tool generates on the fly results to determine the soil carbon sequestration benefits their farm produces now or could produce in the future with increased conservation practices. Try COMET-Planner Global today!

Texas's First Carbon Farm Plan

In a recent episode of NCAT's *Climate Solutions* podcast, the hosts sat down with New Leaf Agriculture's Farm Director Matt Simon to discuss Texas's first ever carbon farm plan (CFP). New Leaf is a 21-acre farm outside of Austin, TX that "employs refugee farmers from traditional farming cultures in dignified work that reconnects them to farming in their new communities." Their carbon farm plan – developed in partnership with NCAT and Carbon Cycle Institute – consists of testing no-till and strip-till, and planting windbreaks. As part of this plan, **they use COMET-Planner to quantify their emission reductions**; in fact, they've already estimated that the implementation of their plan's practices will result in a decrease of 22 annual metric tonnes of CO_2 equivalent. On May 22, New Leaf hosted an interactive Carbon Farm Demonstration Day during which they presented their CFP and raised awareness of the links between climate, resilience, farm productivity and resilience. We're excited to see how COMET-Tools can continue to support the development of this project.


Leia Vita, Farmers Footprint 2021


Matt Simon, New Leaf Agriculture

Conservation and Carbon Funding for Farmers

In the 2023 Soybean Summit presentation, Megan Miller from the Illinois Soybean Association discusses the political, economic, and business factors driving the current conservation and carbon market movement. Miller highlights how reports from COMET-Planner indicate that cover cropping and no-tilling in Illinois can sequester an addition 1.5 tonnes of CO_2 per acre.

Opportunities and Challenges Associated with 'Carbon Farming' for U.S. Row-Crop Producers

Choices, a publication of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, mention COMET-Planner when discussing the opportunities and challenges of using carbon sequestration or carbon farming as an alternative for addressing climate change. The authors assess the sequestration potential of farming practices in the U.S. and introduce questions and challenges surrounding soil carbon sequestration. **They use COMET-Planner specifically to highlight two of the most frequently discussed practices for sequestering carbon: no-till/reduced tillage and cover crops**. The implementation of no-till/reduced tillage and cover crops is reported by COMET-Planner to sequester 0.31 and 0.37 MT/acre/year of CO_2e, respectively. The authors outline that because the implementation of no-till and cover crop practices on 100% of cropland across the U.S. would still only sequester about 5% of total U.S. emissions annually, use of carbon sequestration as a means of addressing climate change is "not a panacea."

COMET-FARM TEAM SPOTLIGHT

This March, we welcomed Andie Conlon as the Assistant Outreach Specialist! Andie joined the COMET-Team after receiving her Masters in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources from Colorado State University. In her new role, Andie supports the COMET team by providing trainings, developing outreach materials (like this newsletter!), and managing social media. Most recently, she created a new COMET tutorial series on YouTube that helps users with tasks like uploading shapefiles, using the drag and drop feature, or creating management scenarios.

COMET-Tools in Action: Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF)

SFF is a grant program spearheaded by the Washington State Conservation Commission that supports farms and ranchers implementing climate-smart practices. According to Karen Hills, SFF Coordinator, the program's goal is to make these practices that sequester carbon or reduce greenhouse gas emissions on agricultural lands more accessible and "financially feasible for producers." After first releasing a request for applications in November of 2022, all $1.8 million of the funds have been committed to 53 projects, and a new round of funding is set to begin in July 2023. As part of the proposal process, applicants agreed to include an estimated CO_2 equivalent impact benefit in their project – specifically "**COMET Farm, COMET Planner, or a similar, SCC-approved model**." Hills says their partnership with NRCS led to the incorporation of COMET-Tools into their funding guidelines: "It was a no-brainer."

The 53 funded projects fund technical or financial assistance to producers implementing climate-smart practices including allowing new equipment (e.g., no-till drills) to be included in conservation district rental programs.

Dean Hellie, Stevens County Conservation District

SFF Down the Line

SFF received funding for the 2023-25 biennium to include cost share for dairies to install anaerobic digesters, alternative manure management practices, and research and development projects with GHG benefits. They also now allow demonstration projects that showcase practices that are either eligible and include an outreach component or not yet eligible but show promise. Hills is optimistic about SFF's "opportunities for education among producers and conservation district technical staff about climate-smart best practices."

WaCSE

The Washington Climate Smart Estimator (WaCSE) tool was developed by WSDA data scientist Jadey Ryan for use in the SFF program. Using the COMET-Planner dataset, WaCSE expands the tool by allowing quick comparisons between multiple Washington counties or practices at the same time. Results are presented in tabular and graphical form and include EPA's equivalency calculator to make data more meaningful to users. Try out the WaCSE tool linked here!

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@cometfarm /COMETFarmTool appnrel@colostate.edu