**Definitions**

\*\* **U.S.-Held Easements** are easements acquired and held by NRCS on behalf of the United States for the purposes of restoration, protection, enhancement, management, maintenance, and monitoring of the specified Conservation Values of the land, such as benefits to soil, water, wildlife, agricultural land, and related natural resources. NRCS enters into a producer contract directly with eligible landowners. Landowners are paid a percentage of the value of the easement depending on the easement’s level of restriction.

1 **Applicant (Decision Maker)** means the individual/entity authorized to make decisions pertaining to the application and whose name will be displayed on the NRCS contract or agreement documents if selected for funding.

2 **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher** means either: (1)(i) A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service), and (ii) Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years (to be determined annually using Commerce Department Data);

or

(2) A legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraph (1). A legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraph (1) of this definition.

3 **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** means an individual, person, Indian Tribe, Tribal corporation, or legal entity who—

(1) Has not operated a farm or ranch, or non-industrialized private forest land (NIPF), or who has operated a farm or ranch or NIPF for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm, ranch, or NIPF.

(2) In the case of an individual, individually, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm, ranch, or NIPF consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.

(3) In the case of a legal entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm, ranch, or NIPF. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm, ranch, or NIPF would be seriously impaired.

4 **Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** means an individual or an entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For a legal entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the legal entity must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. These groups consist of the following:

* American Indians or Alaska Natives
* Asians
* Blacks or African Americans
* Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
* Hispanics.

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs. The term entities reflect a broad interpretation to include partnerships, couples, legal entities, etc.

5 **Veteran Farmer or Rancher** means a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof; was released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable, and—

* Has not operated a farm or ranch; or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years; or
* Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.