

Integrated Farm Program Proposal

Description

- Developed as an alternative agricultural conservation program under A.R.S. § 45-468.02(F).
- The Integrated Farm Program is an *optional* program and would serve as a middle ground between Base Program and the Best Management Practices (BMP) Program. It would have the simplicity of an allotment-based program, with the relief in administrative work that is provided by the BMP program.
- The Integrated Farm Program would allow an owner/operator to combine allotments of Irrigation Grandfathered Rights (IGFR) and apply that water allotment anywhere on the combined footprint of IGFRs, as the owner/operator sees fit.
- The reporting for these farms could also be completed for the Integrated Farm unit, rather than for each individual IGFR.
- This program would include a cut to the aquifer from the total combined annual allotment.

Allotment Calculation/Cut to the Aquifer

- An annual allotment would be calculated for each IGFR in the Integrated Farm unit, as it is for the Base Program, pursuant to A.R.S. § 45-465. The total combined annual allotment for the Integrated Farm unit would be the sum of the individual IGFRs' annual allotments, minus a cut to the aquifer of 7.5%.

Eligibility

- IGFRs that would be combined for participation in this program must be in the same irrigation district, or IGFRs that are not in a district must be in the same sub-basin in order to be combined. IGFRs that are not in a district may not be combined with those in a district.
- Each IGFR must be in compliance with their flexibility account provisions. An IGFR's flexibility account debits cannot be in excess of 50 percent of its annual groundwater allotment. A flex debit account in excess of this amount must be eliminated by either accumulating or transferring flexibility account credits in an amount equal to or greater than the existing debit violation.
- If the applicant is leasing the land, a signed affidavit from the owner of each IGFR for which the application is filed stating that the owner agrees to regulation under the Integrated Farm Program until future conservation requirements, as established by the legislature, become effective.
- A completed Integrated Farm Program application must be submitted to the Department by July 1, 2024 for consideration for approval for participation in the program starting on January 1, 2025.

Flexibility Accounts

- Existing flexibility accounts would be frozen under this program.
- A separate flexibility account would be created for the Integrated Farm unit and would debit or accrue credits according to the total allotment for the Integrated Farm. The flex account would

be limited to debits/accruals totaling +/-50% of the total allotment. A flexibility account that has a negative balance exceeding 50% would be out of compliance with this program.

- Upon exiting the program, frozen flexibility accounts would be reinstated. The Integrated Farm unit’s flexibility account would be split proportionally by acreage among IGFRs and added to the previously frozen flexibility accounts.

Exiting the Program

The owner/operator of the Integrated Farm Program enrolled IGFR(s) would be regulated under the Integrated Farm Program until future requirements become effective, unless there is a new owner and both the following conditions pertain:

- New owner has submitted a written request from the Department to withdraw from the program. Requests must be written within 30 days after the conveyance and will not be granted if the purpose for conveyance was removal from the program.
- The owner of the Integrated Farm Program enrolled IGFR(s) demonstrates that they have been unable to find a person willing to lease the IGFR(s) and be regulated under the Integrated Farm Program.

