



Guideline

Property Tax Valuation Concepts - Agricultural Property

March 2014

True And Full Value

For property classified as agricultural, the true and full value is its agricultural value, which is defined as the “capitalized average annual gross return,” except for inundated agricultural land. The capitalized value represents the landowner’s share of gross returns per acre from agricultural land.

County Average Agricultural Value

Each year the Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics at North Dakota State University (NDSU) has the responsibility to compute the average agricultural value per acre of cropland, noncropland and inundated agricultural land for each county. In addition, NDSU computes an average value per acre of all agricultural lands on a countywide and statewide basis. These values are provided to the State Tax Commissioner by December 1 of each year. The model for this process is contained in North Dakota Century Code § 57-02-27.2.

The model uses the county’s annual crop production and annual regional market prices by crop reporting districts for the major crops and summerfallow. The major crops include: spring wheat (fallow, continuous and irrigated), durum (fallow, continuous and irrigated), barley (fallow, continuous and irrigated), oats, rye, sunflower (oil and non-oil), flaxseed, corn grain (dryland and irrigated), corn silage (dryland and irrigated), alfalfa hay, other hay, soybeans, winter wheat, dry edible beans, sugar-beets, potatoes (dryland and irrigated), and canola. Cropland data includes acres planted and harvested. Noncropland production data includes rangeland and pastureland acreage estimates and gross income potential of the land based upon animal unit carrying capacity. Most of the data in the model is obtained from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The annual gross return for cropland in each county is determined by using 20 percent of the county’s annual gross income produced by sugar beets and potatoes, plus 30 percent of the county’s annual gross income from the other crops, plus a share of government payments. Annual gross return from irrigated cropland is 50 percent of the dryland rate to recognize additional expense associated with irrigation. The average annual gross return is determined for each county by considering the annual gross returns for the most recent ten years for which data is available preceding the current year, eliminating the returns from the highest and lowest years, and averaging the remaining eight years. The average annual gross return is adjusted by a cost of production index, which accounts for the increasing proportion of the total cost of production represented by variable costs. The data source for this index is *Items Used For Production* from the *Prices Paid Index* published by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The adjusted average annual gross return per acre is capitalized into an agricultural value per acre for each county by dividing the adjusted average annual gross return by an appropriate capitalization rate.

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The capitalization rate is calculated by taking the twelve most recent years' gross federal land bank (AgriBank, FCB) mortgage rate of interest for North Dakota, eliminating the highest and lowest years, and averaging the remaining ten years. However, the capitalization rate may not be less than 8.0 percent for taxable year 2009, 7.7 percent for taxable year 2010, and 7.4 percent for taxable year 2011.

A noncropland value is determined for each county in the same manner as cropland value, except that the annual gross return is 25 percent of the gross annual income potential from livestock.

The agricultural value of inundated land is 10 percent of the average agricultural value of noncropland for each county. "Inundated agricultural land" means:

1. Property classified as agricultural property containing a minimum of ten contiguous acres if the value of the inundated land exceeds ten percent of the average agricultural value of noncropland for the county;
2. which is inundated to an extent making it unsuitable for growing crops or grazing farm animals for two consecutive growing seasons or more;
3. and which produced revenue from any source in the most recent prior year which is less than the county average revenue per acre for noncropland calculated by the agricultural economics department of the North Dakota state university.

Application for classification as inundated agricultural land must be made in writing to the township assessor or county director of tax equalization by March 31 of each year, and must be approved by the board of county commissioners before all or part of a parcel of land may be classified as inundated agricultural land. Determinations concerning classification as inundated agricultural land may be appealed through the informal equalization process and formal abatement process.

An average value per acre for all agricultural land for each county is determined from the cropland, noncropland and inundated agricultural land values by weighting the average of the three categories by the acreage in each category.

Average Agricultural Value For Each County

Each year before January 1, the Tax Commissioner provides to each of the county directors of tax equalization the county average agricultural values as computed by NDSU.

Average Agricultural Value For Each Assessment District

The county director of tax equalization determines an estimate of the average agricultural value per acre for each township or assessment district. The total agricultural value of all the assessment districts, divided by the total number of taxable agricultural acres, should be equal to the average agricultural value per acre for the county as provided by the tax commissioner. The county director of tax equalization provides these values to the local assessors before February 1 each year.

The county director of tax equalization shall use soil type and soil classification data from detailed and general soil surveys to estimate the average agricultural value for each assessment district relative to the county average agricultural value.

Before February 1 of each year, the county director of tax equalization shall provide to all assessors of agricultural property in the county a schedule of modifiers, approved by the state supervisor of assessments, that must be used to adjust agricultural property assessments within the county.

Assessor Estimates Value Of Each Parcel Of Agricultural Land

The local assessor estimates the relative agricultural value for each quarter section or smaller parcel of agricultural land in the assessment district. The total agricultural value of the district divided by the total number of taxable agricultural acres should be equal to the average value of agricultural land as estimated by the county director of tax equalization for that district.

Detailed soil surveys provide an accurate method of estimating the relative agricultural value for each parcel. First, the assessor shall use soil type and soil classification from the detailed or general soil surveys. Second, the assessor shall use the schedule of modifiers approved by the state supervisor of assessments to adjust for conditions not documented in the soil surveys. Third, the assessor shall consider actual use of the property for cropland or noncropland purposes by the owner of the parcel.

Assessor's Or Township Board's Estimate Of Average Value

If local assessor or township board of equalization develops an average value of agricultural land for the assessment district that is substantially different from the estimate provided by the county director of tax equalization, written evidence supporting a change in valuation must be presented to the county director of tax equalization. If the county director of tax equalization disagrees with the values as submitted by the township board of equalization, the matter is resolved by the county board of equalization.

Implementation of Soil Type and Soil Classification Data Required

* For any county that has not fully implemented use of soil type and soil classification data from detailed or general soil surveys by February 1 of any taxable year after 2011, the Tax Commissioner shall direct the State Treasurer to withhold 5 percent of that county's allocation each quarter from the state aid distribution fund under N.D.C.C. § 57-39.2-26.1 beginning with the first quarter of 2013, and continuing until the Tax Commissioner certifies to the State Treasurer that the county has fully implemented use of soil type or soil classification data. The amount withheld from the allocation must be withheld entirely from the portion of the allocation which may be retained by the county and may not reduce allocations to any political subdivisions within the county.

The amount withheld from the allocation must be deposited into the agricultural land valuation fund. All monies deposited in the agricultural land valuation fund must be allocated to the county from which the withholding was made upon certification from the Tax Commissioner of the implementation of subsection 7 of section 57-02-27.2 by that county.

* Indicates significant change since last revised.

Land Used for Extraction of Oil, Natural Gas, or Subsurface Minerals

Land that was assessed as agricultural property at the time the land was put to use for extraction of oil, natural gas, or subsurface minerals as defined in N.D.C.C. § 38-12-01 must continue to be assessed as agricultural property if the remainder of the surface owner's parcel of property on which the subsurface mineral activity is occurring continues to qualify for assessment as agricultural property under subsection 1 of N.D.C.C. § 57-02-01.