

OFFICIAL



Australian Government
**Department of Industry, Science,
Energy and Resources**

Salinity Guidelines

To the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative)
Regulations 2011

November 2020

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Salinity Guidelines to specified tree planting

The *Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Regulations 2011* (Regulations) provide for the Australian Government to issue Salinity Guidelines to assist Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) project proponents determine whether specified tree planting is an excluded offsets project under subsection 56(1) of the *Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011*.

Specified tree planting is defined by the Regulations to mean the planting of trees in an area that, according to the CFI rainfall map, receives more than 600mm long-term average annual rainfall. The CFI rainfall map is available at <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/emissions-reduction-fund-environmental-data>.

Specified tree planting projects may be eligible under conditions designed to help manage the effects of commercial tree plantings on water availability. Conditions are outlined in the Regulations.

One of the conditions where a specified tree planting is not an excluded offsets project is if the project proponent can demonstrate the planting contributes to the mitigation of dryland salinity in accordance with one of the methods in these Salinity Guidelines – subregulation 3.37(3). These methods differ in the type of evidence that is required to demonstrate compliance.

- **Method 1** requires a current regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) plan, or subsidiary plan, as the form of evidence. Where the relevant regional NRM plan has the necessary information available, this method will be the most straightforward to use.
- **Method 2** requires salinity risk maps and other supporting information as evidence. This method will be most relevant where the regional NRM plan does not contain the necessary information, but where this information is in other mapping products that have been endorsed by jurisdictions and NRM organisations.
- **Method 3** requires measurement or monitoring information from the project area/s. It is expected that this method would be used where there is no existing information available to demonstrate that the planting of trees would mitigate dryland salinity in the project area/s.

Each of the methods requires either the project proponent (supported by an audit) or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the relevant regional NRM organisation to confirm that the geographic location of the planting, in relation to the local topography, will contribute to the mitigation of dryland salinity; i.e. the project area/s need to be affected by dryland salinity, or hydrologically connected to an area affected by dryland salinity, and the tree planting needs to be under circumstances that would help to mitigate this dryland salinity.

There is a checklist at the end of these guidelines that lists the documents that a project proponent will need to submit with their application for declaration of an eligible offsets project (Project Application) to demonstrate adherence to these guidelines.

Dryland salinity typically occurs in areas that receive between 600-800mm long-term average annual rainfall. Project proponents and CEOs of regional NRM organisations should consider carefully whether the planting of trees in areas outside of this rainfall band would mitigate dryland salinity.

Links to the individual NRM organisations are provided through the Australian Government website nrm.gov.au.

Further information on the ERF and the Regulations is available on cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/ERF/ and industry.gov.au/funding-and-incentives/emissions-reduction-fund.

Method 1

Demonstrate that the planting of trees in the project area/s can be identified in a current regional NRM plan, or any subsidiary plan by a regional NRM organisation, as contributing to the mitigation of dryland salinity.

Compliance with these guidelines may be achieved by the project proponent providing as an attachment to their Project Application a letter confirming that both the geographic location of the project area/s and the position of the planting in relation to the local topography will contribute to the mitigation of dryland salinity in a manner that is consistent with the regional NRM plan or subsidiary plan by the regional NRM organisation. The plan must be current at the time of project commencement.

The NRM plan must show that the project area/s is affected by dryland salinity or is hydrologically connected to an area affected by dryland salinity and should describe the type of topography which would mitigate dryland salinity when planted with trees. Supporting information may also be used to show that the topography is consistent with mitigating dryland salinity.

The letter must reference the plan and parts of the plan used to demonstrate adherence to this method.

Option 1

- The letter is a signed letter from the CEO of the relevant regional NRM organisation.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.

Option 2

- The letter is a signed letter from the project proponent.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.
- Information in the letter and any supporting report must be verified by a Registered Greenhouse and Energy Auditor with relevant qualifications in one or more of the following: soil science; hydrology; or hydrogeology. This audit report will also need to be attached to the Project Application. Information on auditors is available on the Clean Energy Regulator's website cleanenergyregulator.gov.au. Responsibility for the cost of the audit lies with the project proponent.

Method 2

Demonstrate that the planting of trees in the project area/s can be identified as contributing to the mitigation of dryland salinity with reference to jurisdictional or NRM organisation endorsed salinity risk mapping products and other supporting information.

Compliance with these guidelines may be achieved by the project proponent providing as an attachment to their Project Application a letter confirming that both the geographic location of the project area/s and the position of the planting in relation to the local topography will contribute to the mitigation of dryland salinity as identified by at least one of the mapping products described below and any supporting information.

A groundwater salinity map identifying the project area/s as occurring either on a saline groundwater table or hydrologically connected to a saline groundwater table; or

A groundwater flow system map identifying the project area/s as occurring either in a groundwater flow system with a medium to high salinity risk or hydrologically connected to a groundwater flow system with a medium to high salinity risk; or

An endorsed salinity risk mapping product identifying the project area/s as occurring either in a region with a medium to high salinity risk or hydrologically connected to a region with a medium to high salinity risk.

The map/s used to demonstrate adherence to these guidelines must be referenced in the letter and must be based on the best available data for the area. The map must be endorsed by the relevant jurisdiction or NRM organisation. Any associated metadata for the map should be available for auditing purposes if required.

Other information (eg. technical reports) may be needed to support the mapping products. This information should also be referenced in the letter or provided in a report attached to the letter.

Option 1

- The letter is a signed letter from the CEO of the relevant regional NRM organisation.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.

Option 2

- The letter is a signed letter from the project proponent.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.
- Information in the letter and any supporting report must be verified by a Registered Greenhouse and Energy Auditor with relevant qualifications in one or more of the following: soil science; hydrology; or hydrogeology. This audit report will also need to be attached to the Project Application. Information on auditors is available on the Clean Energy Regulator's website cleanenergyregulator.gov.au. Responsibility for the cost of the audit lies with the project proponent.

Method 3

Demonstrate that the planting of trees in the project area/s can be identified as contributing to the mitigation of dryland salinity with supporting evidence.

Compliance with these guidelines may be achieved by the project proponent providing as an attachment to their Project Application a letter confirming that both the geographic location of the project area/s and the position of the planting in relation to the local topography will contribute to the mitigation of dryland salinity as supported by appropriate measurement and/or monitoring information collected from the site.

This measurement and/or monitoring information must be referenced in the letter and must be retained by the project proponent and made available for auditing purposes if required.

Other information (eg. technical reports) may be needed to support the measurement and/or monitoring data. This information should also be referenced in the letter or provided in a report attached to the letter.

Option 1

- The letter is a signed letter from the CEO of the relevant regional NRM organisation.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.

Option 2

- The letter is a signed letter from the project proponent.
- Any supporting information may be provided in a short report attached to the letter.
- Project proponents who choose this option will need to have the information in the letter and any supporting report verified by a Registered Greenhouse and Energy Auditor with relevant qualifications in one or more of the following: soil science; hydrology; or hydrogeology. This audit report will also need to be attached to the Project Application. Information on auditors is available on the Clean Energy Regulator's website cleanenergyregulator.gov.au. Responsibility for the cost of the audit lies with the project proponent.

Checklist

Documents to attach to your Project Application to demonstrate compliance with the Salinity Guidelines.

If you are using Option 1 of Method 1, 2 or 3:

- A signed letter to the Clean Energy Regulator from the CEO of the relevant NRM organisation containing the information requested in the method.
- Any supporting information or documentation in the form of a short report attached to the letter.

If you are using Option 2 of Method 1, 2 or 3:

- A signed letter to the Clean Energy Regulator from the project proponent containing the information requested in the method.
- Any supporting information or documentation in the form of a short report attached to the letter.
- A report from a Registered Greenhouse and Energy Auditor verifying the letter and any supporting information.