How to Build Your Nutrient Budget

TopSoil® by Continuum Ag • topsoil.ag

Starting with the **2027 crop**, every field in a 45Z program needs a **written nutrient budget before any fertilizer, manure or legume cover crop goes on**. It's a simple plan of your intentions: the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium you plan to apply, and what your crop is expected to remove. Continuum Ag's Nutrient Budget tool walks you through it in three steps — **Your info**, **Your fields** and **Review** — then sends it out for signature and keeps the signed plan on file for your CI Certification®.

BEFORE YOU START — HAVE THESE READY

- **A list of your corn and soybean fields** — field names, planted acres and crop. A report from your crop insurance agent with each field's **APH** is the easiest starting point.
- **One of these to back up your plan:** a **soil test less than 2 years old** (the lab report as a PDF, photo or CSV) **or** the name and email of an **independent Agricultural Expert**, such as your CCA, who will sign it.
- **Your planned products and rates** — fertilizer, manure (with a manure test) and any legume cover crop.
- **A plant code**, if your ethanol plant gave you one.

Already have an EQIP 590 nutrient plan that accounts for fertilizer, manure and legume credits, and is backed by a soil test or signed off by a CCA? That plan works — you don't need to rebuild it here.

PART 1 Open Nutrient Budget

Log in at **topsoil.ag** and you land on your **Dashboard**.

Under **TOPSOIL CONNECT | CI CERTIFICATION**, click the **NUTRIENT BUDGET** tile — third from the left.

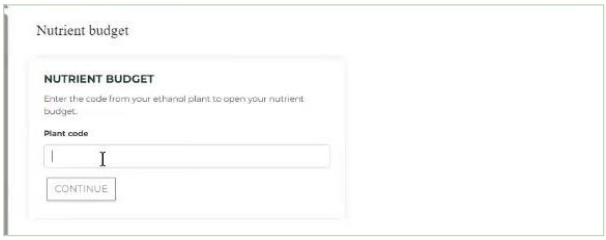


Dashboard — NUTRIENT BUDGET is the third tile.

If you're already enrolled with Continuum Ag, the tool opens straight away — skip to Part 2.

If you're asked for a **Plant code**, enter the code from your ethanol plant and click **CONTINUE**.

No code and not sure where you stand? Email service@continuum.ag.



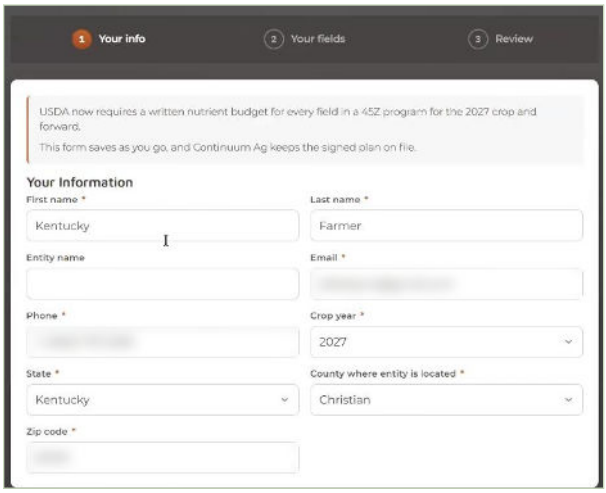
Only asked if you need a plant code.

PART 2 Your info

Step 1 of 3. Most of this is filled in from your TopSoil account — check it and fill any gaps:

- First and last name, and **entity name** if you farm under one
- Email and phone
- **Crop year: 2027**
- State, county and zip code

The form **saves as you go**, so you don't have to finish in one sitting.



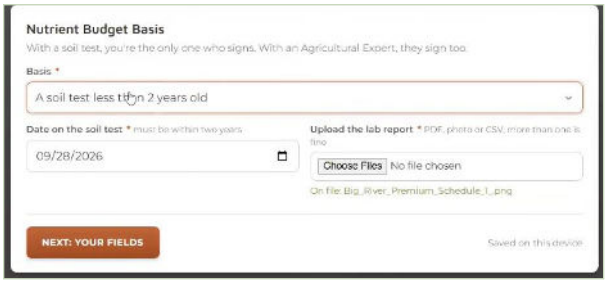
Your info — check what's prefilled.

Nutrient Budget Basis — pick ONE

This is what your rates are based on, and it decides who signs. Choose it from the **Basis** dropdown.

Option A A soil test less than 2 years old

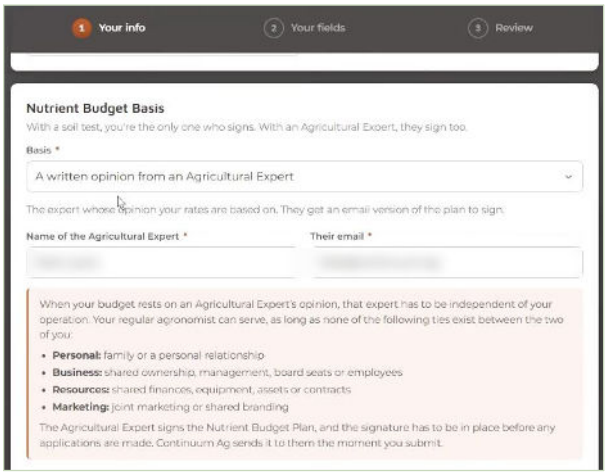
- Enter the **date on the soil test** — it must be within two years.
- Click **Choose Files** and upload the lab report. A PDF, photo or CSV works, and more than one file is fine.
- With a soil test, **you're the only one who signs**.



Soil test basis — date plus the lab report.

Option B A written opinion from an Agricultural Expert

- Enter the expert's **name** and **email**.
- When you submit, Continuum Ag **emails them the plan to sign** — and you sign too.
- Give your expert a heads-up so the email doesn't catch them off guard.
- Their signature has to be in place **before any applications are made**.



Agricultural Expert basis — they sign too.

YOUR AGRICULTURAL EXPERT HAS TO BE INDEPENDENT

Your regular agronomist or CCA can sign, as long as none of these ties exist between the two of you:

- **Personal:** family or a personal relationship — not your brother at the co-op
- **Business:** shared ownership, management, board seats or employees
- **Resources:** shared finances, equipment, assets or contracts — e.g. you rent ground from them
- **Marketing:** joint marketing or shared branding

Member-owner of a co-op and using a co-op employee? That's still being clarified. To be safe for now, use someone else or go the soil test route.

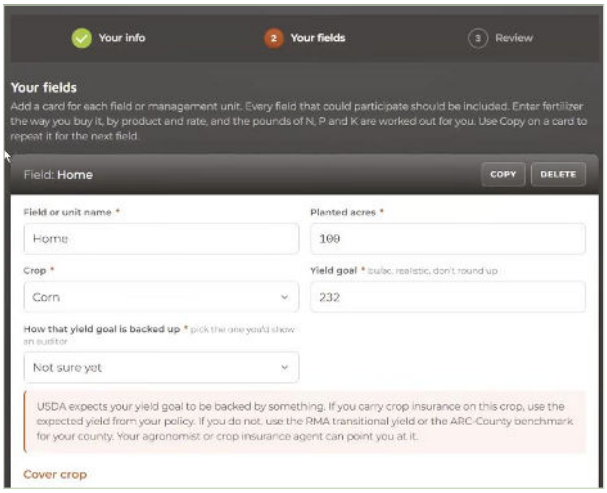
When your basis is set, click **NEXT: YOUR FIELDS**.

PART 3 Your fields — one card per field

Step 2 of 3. Add a card for **every corn and soybean field** that could be in a 45Z program — if you're doing a handful, do them all. Enter fertilizer the way you buy it, by product and rate, and the pounds of N, P and K are worked out for you.

Field basics

- **Field or unit name** and **planted acres**
- **Crop**
- **Yield goal** in bu/ac — realistic, don't round up
- **How that yield goal is backed up** — pick the one you'd show an auditor. **Crop insurance expected yield (APH)** is best. No crop insurance? Use the RMA transitional yield or the ARC-County benchmark for your county.
- **Not sure yet** holds your place, but come back and change it.



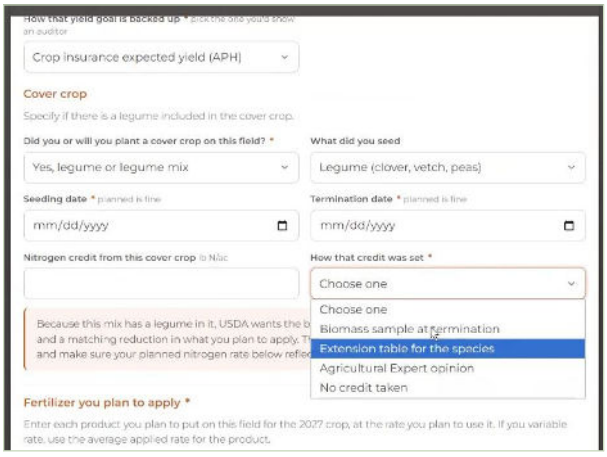
Field basics — APH is the preferred backup.

Cover crop

Answer **Did you or will you plant a cover crop on this field?** — No, Yes with no legume, or Yes with a legume or legume mix.

Only legumes need more detail. A grass-only cover crop needs nothing else. For a legume or legume mix, enter:

- What you seeded
- **Seeding date** and **termination date** — planned dates are fine
- Any **nitrogen credit** you're taking (lb N/ac) — optional
- **How that credit was set** — biomass sample at termination, extension table for the species, Agricultural Expert opinion, or no credit taken



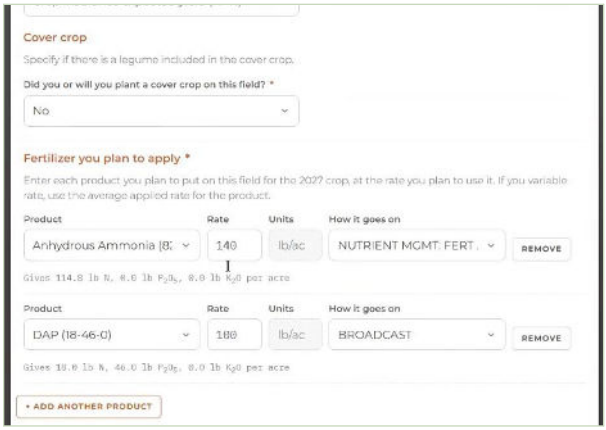
Legume cover crop — dates and any N credit.

Fertilizer you plan to apply

Add **each product** you plan to put on this field for the 2027 crop:

- **Product** — pick from the list. Not there? Choose **Other dry blend** or **Other liquid** and enter the grade.
- **Rate** — at the rate you plan to use it. Variable rate? Use the **field average**.
- **How it goes on** — broadcast, knifed, strip till, planter applied and so on.

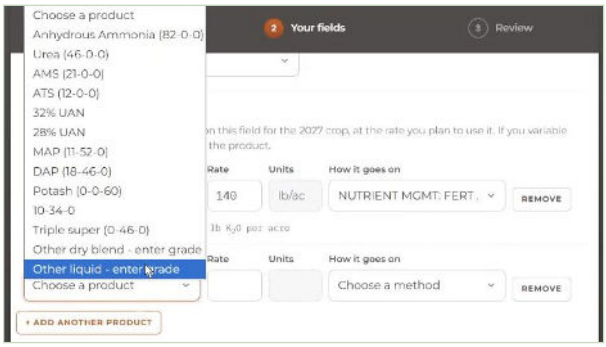
Click **+ ADD ANOTHER PRODUCT** for the next one. Include **every source of N, P and K** — not just nitrogen — plus compost and other specialty products.



One line per product — N, P and K are calculated.

The product list covers the common ones — anhydrous, urea, AMS, ATS, 32% and 28% UAN, MAP, DAP, potash, 10-34-0 and triple super.

The application methods match the ones TopSoil uses everywhere else, so your plan and your records line up.

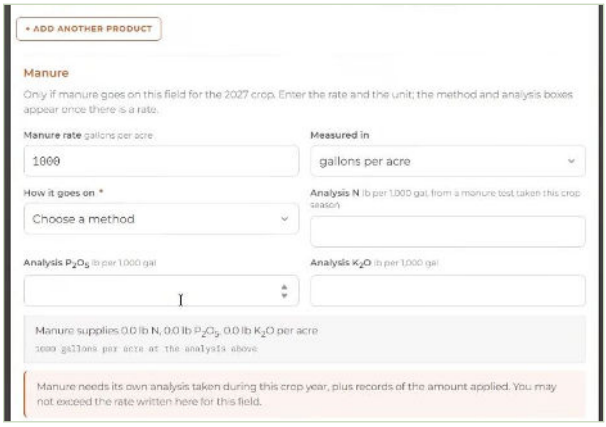


Products are listed with their grade.

Manure — only if manure goes on this field

- Enter the **rate** and what it's **measured in** — gallons or tons per acre. Plan the **highest rate** you might apply.
- Choose **how it goes on**.
- Enter the **N, P_2O_5 and K_2O analysis** from a manure test taken this crop season.

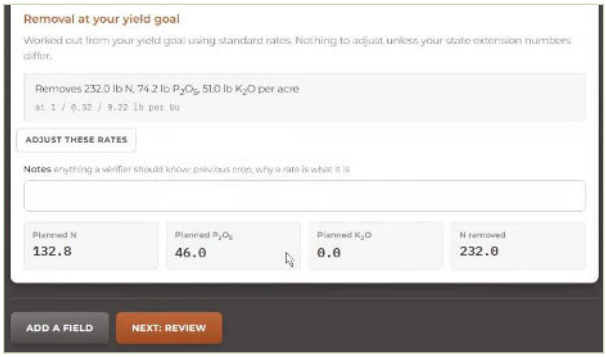
You may not exceed the rate you write here, and you'll need the manure analysis and records of what you applied.



Manure — rate, method and analysis.

Any other nitrogen, removal and a quick check

- **Other nitrogen credit** — only for something your rates above don't already cover, like a previous-crop (soybean) credit.
- **Removal at your yield goal** is worked out for you. Click **ADJUST THESE RATES** only if your state extension numbers differ.
- **Notes** — anything a verifier should know: previous crop, why a rate is what it is.
- Check **Planned N, P_2O_5, K_2O** against **N removed** to make sure nothing looks off.



Planned nutrients next to crop removal.

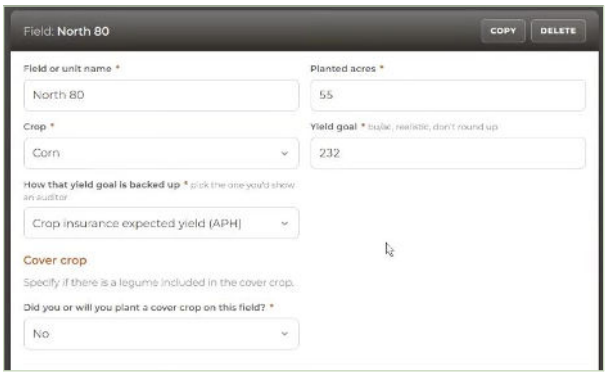
PART 4 Add the rest of your fields

Same plan on the next field? Click **COPY** at the top of the card. Everything is copied — just change the **field name**, **acres** and **yield goal**.

Starting fresh? Click **ADD A FIELD** at the bottom for a blank card. **DELETE** removes a card.

Different programs on different fields — say, manure and no manure — build one of each, then copy the one that fits.

When every field has a card, click **NEXT: REVIEW**.



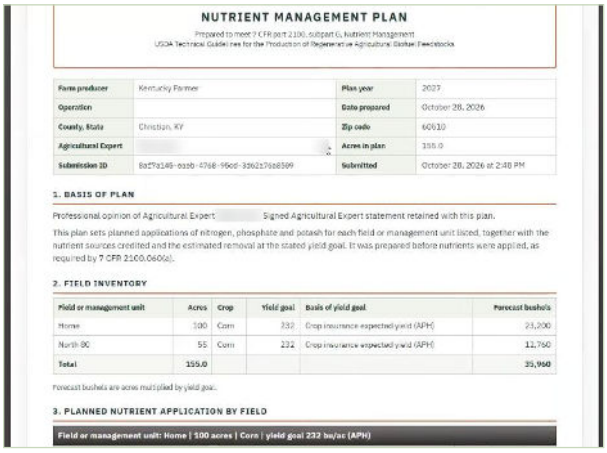
A copied card — rename it and update acres.

PART 5 Review and submit

Step 3 of 3. Your **Nutrient Management Plan** is laid out as it will be signed:

- Basis of plan
- Field inventory, with acres, yield goals and forecast bushels
- Planned nutrient application by field
- Conservation practices (cover crops) by field

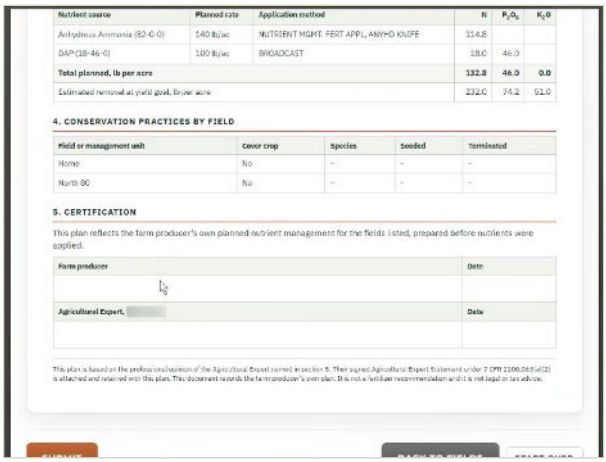
Spot a mistake? Click **BACK TO FIELDS** and fix it.



Review — your plan, ready to sign.

When it's right, click **SUBMIT**.

- **Agricultural Expert basis:** they're emailed the plan to sign, and you sign too.
- **Soil test basis:** you're the only one who signs.
- Continuum Ag keeps the signed plan on file and attaches it to your **2027 CI Certification®** paperwork — no loose papers to keep track of.



Certification — signed by you, plus your expert if used.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Get it done before anything goes on** — fertilizer, manure or a legume cover crop. Already applied for 2027? Finish your plan as soon as you can.
- **It's a plan, not a promise.** If what you apply ends up different, there's no penalty — and the plan doesn't change your CI score.
- **Do every corn and soybean field** that could be in a 45Z program. It's not much more work, and it's there if you need it.
- **Field averages** for variable rate, and **every source of N, P and K**.
- **Your Agricultural Expert must be independent** — and give them a heads-up before you submit.
- 2025 and 2026 crops don't need a nutrient budget.

Questions? The Continuum Ag team is happy to help — **service@continuum.ag**