TVNI Vetiver Grass Technology Case Study Awards

Agriculture — Submission Template Instructions

ICV-8, Chennai, India



The Vetiver Network International
www.vetiver.org

READ THIS FIRST

What we are looking for

We want real stories of vetiver work that has been in the ground long enough to prove itself. Not plans. Not new plantings. Work you can walk up to today and point at.

The best case studies do two things at once. They give us numbers we can trust, and they tell us what actually happened — who did the work, what went well, what went wrong, what changed for people. Both matter. A page of numbers with no story is hard to learn from. A good story with no numbers is hard to defend.

Who can enter

Anyone — farmers, community groups, engineers, researchers, contractors, companies, NGOs, government staff, students. You do not need a degree, a job title, or a research budget.

You are expected to nominate yourself. Nobody will do it for you. If you did good work, send it in. What you report — successes and lessons alike — will help shape future work and help others make better decisions.

If writing is difficult for you, ask someone to write it down as you talk — and if they can type it, better still. Put your name as the person who did the work, and their name as the person who helped write. That is normal and it does not count against you.

This form is for agriculture entries

Vetiver used on farms and grazing land: soil and water conservation, gully control, retrofit on terracing, field boundaries, moisture retention, pest management, fodder production, mulch, crop yield protection, windbreak, and/or vetiver grown as a farm product.[1]

If your work is mainly about **stabilising the soil and/or slopes** — road or railway embankments, riverbanks, dam walls, landslides, gullies, coastal protection, mine spoil — use the **bioengineering** form instead.

If it is mainly about **cleaning up polluted soil or water** — leachate, sewage, industrial effluent, contaminated or salt-affected land — use the **phytoremediation** form.

If your work genuinely spans two, enter under the one that carries the most weight and mention the other in your answers. Do not send the same work twice.

The three-year rule

The vetiver must have been planted at least three years ago — on or before 1 April 2024. Older is better. We want mature applications where the full range of benefits is visible, and where you can honestly say whether it held up over time.

If your site is younger than three years, please keep the records and enter during a future round.

[1] Vetiver cultivated because the plant or its harvested material has commercial or productive value, such as for planting material, roots for essential oil, handicrafts, traditional products, or other processing; leaves/biomass for thatching, mulch, handicrafts, fodder where appropriate, fuel, or industrial uses.

Honesty counts. Here is how we will score it.

A number you honestly call an estimate scores better than a number that pretends to be precise.

We are serious about this. Judges are instructed to reward it. Every time you give a number in the form, put a letter next to it:

Code	Meaning	Example
M	**Measured.** You measured it yourself with a tool, or took a sample yourself and had it tested. Say which tool or laboratory.	"Gully depth reduced 1.4 m **(M**, tape measure, 5 points along the gully**)**"
R	**Records.** It comes from a written record — receipts, logbook, weighbridge slip, someone else's routine lab testing, government data.	"Maize yield 3.2 t/ha **(R**, cooperative purchase receipts, 2024**)**"
E	**Estimate.** Somebody's best judgement. Say whose.	"About 40% less water in the drain **(E**, farmer's estimate**)**"

Never leave a number bare. A form full of **E** codes is a perfectly good entry. A form full of **M** codes with no evidence behind them is a weak one.

Laboratory results. If you took the sample yourself for this entry and sent it to a laboratory, mark the result **M** and name the laboratory. If the result comes from someone else's routine testing or monitoring — a regulator, a factory, a project — mark it **R**.

If you do not know something, write "not known." That is an acceptable answer everywhere in the form.

What you must send with the form

1. **The filled-in form** (the separate Agriculture Submission Template).
2. **Eight to ten photographs**, sent as the original files from the camera or phone. Annex 4 lists exactly which shots we want, so this is quicker than it sounds.
3. **Coordinates of the site**. See Annex 5 — your phone can do this in under a minute.

Anything else is welcome but optional, and all of it helps: a short video, sketches, lab reports, receipts, scheme or project records, maps, newspaper clippings, a letter from a local official or cooperative confirming the work, or other.

Language

Write in whatever language you are most comfortable in. We translate entries using Google Translate. If a translated answer does not make sense to us, we will write back and ask you.

Two easy things make the translation come out right:

- **Keep sentences short.** One idea per sentence. Short plain sentences translate accurately. Long sentences with many clauses come out confused, and a good answer can be lost that way.
- **Type your answers if you can.** Typed text translates reliably. Handwriting does not always.

Writing by hand? It is accepted but read Annex 1 first — there are a few simple things that make the difference between a readable entry and one we cannot process.

How we check what you send: Annex 1. We cannot visit your site, so we work from your map point (coordinates), your photographs and your documents.

How long this takes

If you already know your site, expect **two to four hours**. Questions marked **[Required]** must be answered. Questions marked **[Helpful]** make your entry stronger, but leaving one blank will not disqualify you.

Send an incomplete form rather than no form.

Deadline and where to send

- **Deadline: 1 April 2027.**
- **Send your entry to:** information@vetiver.org — put **TVNI Award Submission** in the subject line.
- **Questions:** information@vetiver.org — put **TVNI Awards question** in the subject line. Ask early rather than late. If something in the form is unclear, other people are probably stuck on it too.

If your photographs and video are too large to email, put them in a shared folder (Google Drive, Dropbox, WeTransfer or similar), make sure the link is open to anyone, and send us the link with your form. Most videos will need to be sent this way, especially if they are longer than 30 seconds.

THE ANNEXES

Everything from here on is background. **You do not have to read any of it to enter.** It is here so the form itself stays short, and so that anyone who wants to know why a question is asked, or how to measure something, can find out.

Annex 1	Notes on particular questions — why they are asked, how they are scored
Annex 2	Ideas for what to report in question 5.1
Annex 3	What a strong answer looks like — weak and strong versions of three questions
Annex 4	Photo guide — which photographs to send
Annex 5	How to get GPS coordinates
Annex 6	How judges will score your entry

ANNEX 1 — NOTES ON PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

Writing by hand, and how we check what you send

If you are writing by hand. Handwritten entries are accepted and will be judged. But you should know what happens to them.

We do not have people to type up handwritten forms. We use software to read the handwriting and turn it into text, and then to translate that text. The software reads clear handwriting well and messy handwriting badly. If it cannot read your form, your entry stays as handwriting — which means it may not get translated, and a judge who does not read your language may not be able to score it fairly. That would be a poor outcome for good work.

So if you are writing by hand, this is where extra care genuinely pays:

- Use a dark pen — black or dark blue. Not pencil.
- Print your letters rather than joining them up. Block capitals are fine.
- Write on plain or lined white paper, one side of the page only.
- Leave clear space between lines. Do not write in the margins or up the side.
- Photograph each page on its own, laid flat, from directly above, in bright even light with no shadow across the page. Get all four corners in the frame.
- Send the photographs as separate image files. Do not paste them into a document.

If anyone near you has a phone or a computer and can type, ask them. A typed entry is much safer than a handwritten one. Question 1.5 exists so that person can be named and credited.

None of this is a reason not to enter. It is a reason to take a little more care with the pen.

How we check what you send. We cannot visit your site. Every entry is treated the same way: we check it against what can be seen from outside.

- **Satellite images.** Your GPS point lets us look at your site in Google Earth Pro, including its historical images going back years. On many sites this shows the hedge lines, the terraces, the gully or the bare ground, and roughly when things changed.
- **Your photographs and video.** A phone photo carries the date and the location hidden inside the file. Sending the original file rather than a screenshot costs you nothing and helps us confirm what you say.
- **Your documents.** Receipts, lab reports, scheme records, letters from officials.

This is not a test you can fail by having a small site or an old phone. Satellite coverage is patchy, and plenty of good vetiver work will not show up at all. We use whatever is available and judge the entry on its own honesty. What we look for is a mismatch — a site described as transformed where nothing on the ground changed, or photographs that do not match the place. Describe what is really there and there is nothing to worry about.

Question 3.2a — why contour alignment is asked about

The hedge does not need to sit on an exact contour. Generally, an “average contour” is enough, especially in the absence of expertise or training to survey an exact contour. The average contour is fine because the hedge is porous, allowing water to soak in or seep through it and, over time, sediment building up behind the hedge turns the average contour into the actual contour. So, tell us how you set the line out, how well this method worked for you, and if you would do it the same way or differently in the future.

Question 3.7 — herbicide and shade

These are the two things that most reliably kill an established vetiver hedge, and almost nobody reports them. Your answer is useful either way.

Glyphosate kills vetiver outright. If it is used anywhere near your hedge, say so, and say how you have managed it — a no-spray strip, hand weeding, spraying only in still air. That is exactly the sort of practical knowledge other people need and cannot get anywhere else.

Shade. Vetiver is intolerant of shade. A hedge planted in the open and then shaded later suffers more than one established under shade from the start, so if your orchard or agroforestry canopy has closed over the line since planting, tell us what happened to the hedge.

Question 7.1 — how adoption is scored

Judges score how well you know the answer, not how big the number is.

“Four households, I have walked to all four and seen the hedges” scores better than “around 300, people say it has spread all over the district.” The first is a complete and checkable answer. The second is a rumour with a number attached.

If nobody has copied your work, write none. That is an ordinary and honest answer, it costs you very little in the scoring, and a made-up number costs you a great deal — the honesty adjustment can take up to 20 points off.

Question 8.1 — why we ask about failure

Reporting a failure does not weaken your entry. It strengthens it, and the scoring is built that way: lessons learned carries 12 points and answers reporting only success score low there, while the honesty adjustment can add up to 10 for an entry candid about its own limits.

There is a larger reason too. TVNI’s design standards are revised on the strength of exactly this kind of field evidence. Evidence that contradicts current guidance is more useful than evidence that confirms it, and a case study that quietly leaves out what went wrong removes the most valuable thing it had to offer.

ANNEX 2 — IDEAS FOR WHAT TO REPORT

These are prompts for question 5.1, not a checklist. Use anything that fits your site and ignore the rest. **Three results you can support beat ten you cannot.**

These groups follow the areas TVNI's own design standards are trying to build evidence for.

Soil and water held on the land — how long the soil stays wet after rain, or days to wilting; **soil built up behind the hedge**; soil lost from the field; runoff after heavy rain; **reduction in irrigation** — water used, or number of waterings, but only if the crop and the water supply have stayed the same, since this is a stand-in for moisture held rather than a direct measure of it; water in wells, tanks, springs or seeps below the site, remembering that these rise and fall with the rainfall year as well as with your hedges.

How to measure the soil built up. As a hedge traps soil, the ground behind it rises and a terrace forms. Over the years this leaves a step, and the face of that step — on the lower side of the hedge, looking up from the field below — is the easiest thing in the whole form to measure. Hold a ruler or a tape against it at four or five points along the hedge and write down the heights. You do not need to dig, and you do not need to have set a marker years ago. On old hedges this step can reach well above waist height. You can also have two people standing near the hedge, one on the upper side and one on the down side. Have them face the camera and hold their arms nearest the hedge parallel to the ground. The difference in height of their parallel arms provides another measure of the amount of soil accumulated on the upper side of the hedge.

Alternatively, dig down at a few points above the hedge, find the original soil surface, and measure the depth of the hole.

For irrigation and for water in wells, tanks, springs or seeps, say what else changed over the same period. A judge cannot tell a wetter year from a better hedge unless you tell them.

Crops and the season — yield, by crop; area brought back into production or fallow land re-cropped; length of the growing season or earlier planting; fertiliser and manure used; a crop that survived a bad year when it would not have before.

Soil health and soil life — organic matter, soil colour, how easy it is to dig; earthworms and other soil life; root or nematode damage in crops near the hedge compared with away from it; soil carbon if it has actually been measured, naming who measured it and how.

Pests — stem borer damage in maize, sorghum or rice; any other pest, disease or weed change near the hedge.

Vetiver as a crop in its own right — fodder cut and what it fed; mulch cut and where it went; thatch, craft material or slips sold; oil distilled.

Money and labour — income per hectare or per farm; labour saved or added; inputs no longer bought; irrigations or pumping hours saved, and what that is worth in fuel, electricity or water charges.

Any category: biodiversity noticed, carbon stored, jobs created, days of labour saved, number of households benefiting, women's participation.

ANNEX 3 — WHAT A STRONG ANSWER LOOKS LIKE

Examples of weak and strong answers to three questions.

Question 5.1 — What changed?

Weak: “Soil erosion was reduced by 87% and crop yields increased significantly.” *Why it is weak: no code, no method, no period. 87% sounds precise but nothing supports it. Judges cannot use this.*

Also weak: “It worked well and everyone is happy.” *Why it is weak: no result at all. Nothing to learn from and nothing to defend.*

Strong: “A step has formed at the hedges, about 35 cm high (**M**, measured with a ruler against the face of the step at 8 points along the top hedge, June 2026). Maize on the terrace above went from about 8 bags to about 13 bags per acre (**E**, my own count at harvest — I do not weigh the bags). The neighbour’s field on the same slope with no hedges is still at 8 or 9 bags (**E**, he told me).” *Why it is strong: three separate results, each with a source, an honest split between what was measured and what was estimated, and a real comparison. The 35 cm figure is more believable precisely because the maize figure is openly labelled an estimate.*

Question 8.1 — What went wrong?

Weak: “There were some minor initial challenges which were overcome.”

Strong: “The first 400 slips went in during March 2020 and about half died — it was too dry and we had no water to carry. We replanted in June with the rains and lost almost none. The second mistake was spacing the slips 25 cm apart to save money. Cattle pushed through the gaps in the first year. We filled them in at 15 cm in 2021 and the hedge closed up by the following season.” *Why it is strong: specific, dated, admits two failures, and each one teaches the reader something they can use.*

Question 9.1 — One person

Weak: “The project has improved livelihoods and empowered the community.”

Strong: “Lakshmi Devi farms an acre on the upper slope. Before 2020 she left the top third of it fallow because the topsoil kept going into the gully and nothing would grow there. She was the second person in the village to try the hedges, after her brother-in-law. She now crops the whole plot and cuts vetiver leaves for her two goats, which she used to buy fodder for in the dry months. She says the thing that convinced her was not the training — it was walking past her brother-in-law’s field after the 2021 rains and seeing it still had soil on it.”

ANNEX 4 — PHOTO GUIDE

Photographs do more for a case study than any other attachment. Since nobody can visit your site, they are most of what a judge has to look at.

Send eight to ten. Phone photos are fine. The list below is in priority order — if you can only manage six, do the first six. An afternoon walking your site with a phone will get you all of them.

The core set:

1. **A wide shot showing the whole site.** Stand back far enough to see the slope, the fields and the hedge lines.
2. **The same wide shot from a second position**, ideally from the opposite direction or from higher ground. One angle can flatter a site; two rarely do.
3. **A close-up of the vetiver at the base**, showing how dense it is. Put something in the frame for scale — a person, a hand, a ruler, a water bottle.
4. **A view along the length of the hedge**, low down and looking down the line, so we can see whether it is closed or gappy.
5. **The result itself.** The crop, the field that no longer loses soil, the gully that has stopped growing. If a step or terrace has formed at your hedge, photograph its face from the field below with a person or a ruler standing against it for scale — this is one of the most convincing photographs you can send. Also, a photo of people standing on either side of the hedge, facing the camera with their arm nearest the hedge held horizontally, to show the difference in elevation between the upslope and downslope sides is an excellent and easy way to show impact.
6. **A person.** Ideally the person from question 9.1, at the site. Get their permission first.
7. **Damage, failures, or gaps.** Yes, really. Send these. An entry with no photograph of a gap is less believable, not more.
8. **The comparison** — the untreated field, embankment or stretch next door, photographed the same day in the same light. If you claimed a comparison in question 5.3, this is the picture that supports it.

And these where you have them:

9. **Before photographs.** Even a poor-quality old phone photo is extremely valuable. Search your old photos and ask others in the village.
10. **The same view in different years or seasons**, taken from the same standing point.
11. **Your hand sketch of the layout.**
12. **Anything specific to your results** — the measuring pegs, the gully head, the cut fodder, the terrace edge, the crop beside the hedge.
13. **Documents you are relying on** — a lab report, a receipt, a page of a logbook. A clear photograph of the page is fine.

For each photo, tell us: (Name each file with its photo number, for example “4 hedge.jpg” for photo 4 in the list above.)

- What it shows
- Roughly when it was taken (month and year, or “about 2019”)
- Who took it
- Where you were standing and which way you were facing (a compass direction is ideal — “standing at the bottom of the field looking uphill, facing north”)
- Whether the people in it agreed to be photographed

Send the original files. This is important. A photo straight from a phone carries the date, and usually the location, hidden inside the file. A screenshot, or a photo pasted into a Word document,

loses all of that. Since we cannot visit your site, those hidden details are part of how we confirm your entry — so attach the files themselves and do not edit, crop, or filter them.

Better still: use a stamping app for the photos you take now

Ordinary phone photos have two weaknesses. The date and location are hidden inside the file, and WhatsApp, Facebook and many email programs strip them out — so a photo can reach us carrying nothing at all. And an ordinary photo cannot record which way you were facing.

A stamping app fixes both. It prints the date, time, coordinates and compass direction onto the picture itself, so the information survives however you send the photo.

Apps that do this, all free or free to start:

- **Solocator** — iPhone and Android. Stamps location, date, time and **the direction you were facing**. Can save two copies of each shot, one stamped and one clean.
- **Open Camera** — Android only. Free, open source, no advertisements. Stamps date, time and coordinates on the picture and records compass direction inside the file. The lightest choice for an older or low-memory phone.
- **GPS Map Camera** — Android, free with advertisements. Already widely used by field staff in India. Includes compass direction.
- **Timestamp Camera** — iPhone. Stamps date, time and location, but not direction — so write the direction down in words instead.

Any similar app is fine, and if one is already on your phone and does the job, use that. Take one ordinary photo as well as the stamped one where you can.

This applies only to photographs you take now, for this entry. Old photographs from before you had any such app are among the most valuable things you can send. Send them exactly as they are.

If you are not using a stamping app, check that your phone is recording location: on Android, open the Camera app settings and turn on **Location tags**. On iPhone, go to Settings → Privacy & Security → Location Services → Camera and choose **While Using the App**. If it is switched off, that is fine — just tell us the location in words.

Practical tips: morning or late afternoon light shows texture and slope better than midday. If you have a before photo, stand in the same place for the new one. Mark that standing point with a peg or a painted stone so future photos match.

Video (optional, and very useful)

One to three minutes from a phone is plenty. Hold it steady and walk slowly.

- Say the date, the place, and your name aloud at the start of the recording.
- Walk the length of the hedge or the site, so the video shows it is continuous and shows how long it really is.
- Stop at the result — the built-up soil, the crop, the gully head — and say what we are looking at.
- If someone from question 9.1 is willing to speak on camera for thirty seconds, that is worth a great deal to TVNI. Ask permission first.

ANNEX 5 — HOW TO GET GPS COORDINATES

You need one pair of numbers: latitude and longitude. It takes about a minute.

On a smartphone with Google Maps: 1. Open Google Maps while standing at the site. 2. Press and hold your finger on the site until a red pin drops. 3. The numbers appear at the top of the screen or in the panel at the bottom. They look like: **11.4102, 76.6950** 4. Write them down, or tap them to copy.

On an iPhone with the Compass app: open Compass and the coordinates appear at the bottom of the screen.

If you cannot get to the site or have no smartphone: open Google Maps or OpenStreetMap on any computer, find the place, and right-click on it — the coordinates will show. Or simply describe the location as precisely as you can (nearest village, distance and direction from a landmark, road name) and we will locate it with you.

Which format? Decimal degrees are easiest: `11.4102, 76.6950`. But any format your phone gives you is acceptable — do not spend time converting.

For a long site such as a road, canal, or riverbank, give a point at each end.

If your site is an area, not a point

Judges will look at your site in satellite images. A single point tells us where to look but not how far the site extends. If you can, give us its shape as well. Any one of these works:

Easiest — walk the corners. Stand at each corner of the site and take a coordinate reading the same way as above. Three or four corners is plenty. Label them “corner 1, corner 2” and so on.

Better — trace it in Google Earth. Google Earth Pro is free to download on a computer, and Google Earth works in a web browser. 1. Type your coordinates into the search box to fly to your site. 2. Click the **Add Polygon** button (in Earth Pro it is in the top toolbar; in the browser version use **Projects → New Project → Draw line or shape**). 3. Click around the edge of your site to draw its outline. 4. Give it a name and save it. In Earth Pro, right-click the shape in the left-hand panel and choose **Save Place As** to get a `.kml` or `.kmz` file. 5. Attach that file to your entry.

This takes about ten minutes the first time. It is optional — skip it if it is difficult and describe the boundaries in words instead.

One more thing that helps a great deal: tell us about a patch of similar land nearby *without* vetiver — a neighbouring field on the same slope, an untreated stretch of the same bank. Give its coordinates if you can, and photograph it the same day you photograph your own site (photo 8 in Annex 4). A side-by-side comparison is one of the strongest kinds of evidence available to us, and it is what makes your answer to question 5.3 credible.

ANNEX 6 — HOW JUDGES WILL SCORE YOUR ENTRY

Shown here so you know what to put your effort into.

What is scored	Points	What earns the points
Maturity and durability	20	Age beyond three years. Evidence it has survived hard seasons or extreme events. Honest reporting of current condition, including decline.
Quality of evidence	30	Results that are clearly reported, with the method explained and a source given for every number. **Correct and honest use of the M/R/E codes is scored here.** A comparison — untreated area, before-measurements, or a clear explanation of why none was possible.
Attribution	10	A convincing case that the change came from the vetiver and not from something else.
Costs and benefits	15	A usable cost picture, benefits both counted and described, and an honest sense of whether it paid off.
Adoption by others	8	**Scored on how well the spread is known, not on how large it is.** A small number the entrant has counted themselves scores full marks. A large number resting on word of mouth does not. Institutional or policy uptake, and any commercial activity, score here too. No adoption, honestly reported, costs almost nothing.
Lessons learned	12	Specific, useful, and honest about failure. Answers that report only success score low here.
The story	15	Concrete human detail. One person's situation described clearly. Real quotes. Photographs that show the work and the people.
Honesty adjustment	up to −20 / +10	Judges may deduct for numbers presented as more precise than the evidence supports, and may add for an entry that is candid about the limits of its own evidence.

Total: 110, before the honesty adjustment applied on top.

Three things to note.

First, an entry written by a farmer in simple language can score as highly as one written by an engineer — the points are for the work and the honesty, not the prose.

Second, an entry that says "we estimated this and here is why we still believe it" will score above one that reports a precise-looking number it cannot support.

Third, judges will look at your site in satellite images where coverage allows, but **no points are lost because your site cannot be seen from above.** Coverage is patchy and many sites will not show. Answering questions 1.6, 1.7 and 5.5 well helps judges see what there is to see, and nothing more is expected of you than that.
