

Financial Assistance Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 5237S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

488
4/20/09

Re: Docket Number NRCS- IFR-08005" Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Final Rules

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

It's more important than ever that the USDA help support sustainable and organic farmers that protect America's environmental resources and build strong rural communities.

I encourage the USDA to ensure that the EQIP rule is clarified in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill, and that EQIP assistance be made available to all farmers and ranchers for comprehensive whole farm conservation planning.

The final EQIP rule must also require NRCS State Conservationists to rank and process applications for organic conversion assistance in a separate funding pool that makes clear that the limit of \$80,000 over a 4-year period applies only to organic conversion payments and not all EQIP payments made to organic farmers and ranchers.

I recommend that the NRCS amend the EQIP rule to prohibit the use of EQIP funding for animal waste storage, treatment or transportation for new or expanding CAFOs and that the EQIP rule does not allow waivers to increase assistance to CAFOs above the \$300,000 payment limit. Numerous studies have proven conclusively that corporate CAFOs have negative impacts on water quality, decrease the value of their neighbor's property, and harbor antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threatens human health.

Please stand up for sustainable and organic farmers and ranchers and swiftly enact these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Rob Branch-Dasch
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