

The Soil Health Initiative offers technical and financial assistance to New Jersey agricultural producers to implement multi-species cover crops and companion conservation practices. USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) established this Initiative through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and EQIP eligibility requirements apply.

Cover crops protect soil and can help:

- Improve organic matter
- Reduce compaction.



EQIP Application Information

Producers must submit a complete program application and other documentation to support eligibility to be considered for financial assistance through EQIP. NRCS accepts and processes EQIP applications on a continuous basis, but sets application periods to review applications and award contracts. NRCS has established the following dates for the ranking of eligible applications for the Soil Health Initiative:

- **Application Period 1: closes February 21, 2014**
- **Application Period 2: closes March 21, 2014**
- **Application Period 3: closes April 18, 2014**

Applications submitted after these dates will be evaluated and considered for funding during future application periods.

The Core Practice for New Jersey Soil Health Initiative is multi-species crop mix including 3 or more species maintained over a minimum of 90 days. The multi-species mix must be applied on the same acreage for three consecutive years. Applicants that have received payment for cover crop, but have not met our guidelines for a diverse cover crop, may still be eligible for this initiative to install the higher level of treatment. The seeding mixes must be approved mixes from Table 2 in the NJ NRCS Cover Crop standard. The following seeding deadlines for a winter cover apply:

- Planting zones 7a and 7b: Prior to September 15
- Planting zones 6a and 6b: Prior to August 31

Supporting Practices available to producers through the Initiative to complement the multi-species cover crop mix and help ensure that the resource concerns are addressed while implementing and managing the cover crop include:

- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crop
- Integrated Pest Management
- Nutrient Management
- Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till
- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip, Till/Direct Seed
- Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till

Ongoing Soil Health Assessment

The NRCS-NJ Soils Team visit the farm to establish a baseline condition for fields enrolled in the EQIP Soil Health Initiative and then conduct a soil health assessment periodically over the next three years. These analyses will help monitor changes in soil health where cover crops and companion practices have been implemented.

Soil analyses will include, but are not limited to:

- Soil profile description
- Soil organic matter content
- Bulk density measurement
- Soil infiltration utilizing the Cornell rainfall simulator
- Soil chemical analysis for macronutrients.



Who Can Apply

Eligible applicants include individuals, legal entities, Indian Tribes, or joint operations engaged in agricultural production. Eligible producers interested in entering into a financial assistance agreement with NRCS for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time. Applicants must be:

- An agricultural producer and have control of eligible land for the term of the proposed contract period; eligible land includes cropland.
- In compliance with the provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including the provisions for sharing EQIP payments on a fair and equitable basis.
- In compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance provisions.
- Within appropriate payment limitation requirements.
- In compliance with adjusted gross income requirement.

Contact your local USDA Service Center to apply or for more information.

Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties

Columbus Service Center

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Rd
Telephone: (609) 267-1639

Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties

Freehold Service Center

4000 Kozloski Road
Telephone: (732) 462-0075

Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties

Frenchtown Service Center

687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2
Telephone: (908) 782-4614

Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex & Warren counties

Hackettstown Service Center

Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Road
Telephone: (908) 852-2576

Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties

Vineland Service Center

1318 South Main Rd. Bldg 5A
Telephone: (856) 205-1225

Gloucester and Salem counties

Woodstown Service Center

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2
Telephone: (856) 769-1126

Additional information online: www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov