

Fact Sheet:
**Environmental Quality Incentives
Program NEW Seasonal High
Tunnel Initiative**

January 2012

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that offers financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide assistance to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, energy conservation, and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. In addition, EQIP can help producers meet federal, state, Tribal and local environmental regulations.

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers. The goal of the initiative is to assist producers with extending the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. The initiative can assist producers with improving plant and soil quality, reducing nutrient and pesticide transportation, improving air quality through reduced transportation inputs, and reducing energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include individuals, legal entities, Indian Tribes or joint operations engaged in agricultural production. Producers who grow agricultural commodities on eligible land and have resource concerns which may be addressed by a seasonal high tunnel may participate in the new Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative.

Eligible producers interested in entering into a financial assistance agreement with NRCS for EQIP assistance may file an application at their local USDA Service Center at any time. Applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer and have control of eligible land for the term of the proposed contract period.
- Be in control of eligible land such as cropland.
- Be 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.
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements, as specified in the 2008 Farm Bill.
- Be in compliance with adjusted gross income requirements of the 2008 Farm Bill.

How EQIP Works

NRCS staff will work with the applicant to develop a conservation plan and an EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the EQIP contract between NRCS and the participant.

NRCS may also provide financial assistance to participants for conservation planning services through a Technical Service Provider (TSP).



These services are utilized to develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) which will be included in the plan of operations as they provide in depth analysis of specific resource concerns.

Applications submitted for the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative are accepted on a continuous basis throughout the year. Applications are evaluated and ranked according to environmental benefits expected through implementation of approved conservation practices.

For fiscal year 2012, NRCS has established application deadlines where eligible applications will be ranked and considered for funding as follows:

- Application Period 1
Submission Deadline: Friday,
February 3, 2012
- Application Period 2
Submission Deadline: Friday,
March 30, 2012
- Application Period 3
Submission Deadline: Friday,
June 1, 2012

Applications submitted after these deadlines will be evaluated and considered for later funding opportunities.

Payment Limitations

Program payments are limited to \$300,000 a person or entity for all contracts entered into during any six-year period. This limitation includes unpaid prior year contract obligations as of October 1, 2008, as well as new contract obligations. For the purpose of applying this requirement, the six-year period will include those payments made in fiscal years 2009-2014. Payments received for technical assistance are excluded from this limitation.

More Information

For more information and updates about the EQIP Initiatives and other 2008 Farm Bill topics, please visit the Connecticut NRCS website at: www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/programs

Or contact your local Service Center:

Danielson - 860.779.0557
Hamden - 203.287.8038
Norwich - 860.887.3604
Torrington - 860.626.8258
Windsor - 860.688.7725