

# 2013 Organic Initiative At A Glance

Organic farming positively impacts our environment and is one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture. Many organic farming techniques help to improve soil and water quality. Native pollinators, beneficial insects that attack plant pests, and wildlife also benefit from organic systems.



**Applications are accepted continuously. Deadlines for batching periods are January 18, February 15, & March 15, 2013.**

## Program Description



The Organic Initiative is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS is offering more than 40 conservation practices in 2013 to protect water quality and improve soil health. Farmer applications will be ranked in two separate categories or pools: transitioning farmers and certified organic farmers. (Organic producers may also apply for assistance under general EQIP.) **There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP. However, projects addressing significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding. Beginning, socially disadvantaged and limited-resource farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.**

## 2013 Resource Concerns

## Eligibility

## Sample Practices

### Soil Condition



Farmers who own or manage:

- Certified organic operations
- Operations transitioning to certified organic

**Certified organic farmers** must submit a copy of their current organic system plan (OSP) and maintain their organic certification for their entire EQIP contract.

- Conservation Crop Rotation – Add perennials to the rotation
- Residue & Tillage Management – Use No-Till or Strip Till
- Cover Crop – Use Legume or High Biomass Cover Crops

### Water Quality/Soil Erosion Prevention



**Transitioning organic farmers** need to:

- begin or be in the process of transitioning to a certified organic operation.
- submit a self-certification letter stating they agree to develop and implement an organic system plan (template available online).
- be working with an organic certifying agency.

- Contour Farming – Farming on the Contour
- Residue & Tillage Management – Use Mulch Till methods



*NRCS field staff can assist producers who are interested in transitioning to organic crop production.*



*Seasonal high tunnels on existing cropland help to increase the availability of locally-grown produce.*



*Native bees are valuable crop pollinators.*

Organic Initiative ranking criteria have been established based on resource concerns that link to National Organic Program (NOP) objectives. In fiscal year 2013, applicants will be evaluated continuously during the ranking periods.

Practices receiving special emphasis include:

- Establishing Perennials in Your Rotation
- Increasing the Use of Cover Crops
- Implementing No-Till and Strip-Till Methods
- Installing Field Borders and Wildflower Planting
- Establishing Trees and Shrubs

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals. Information and application forms to begin the program application process are available at your local NRCS office.

You will need to file several eligibility forms at the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs. These offices are usually co-located with NRCS. You will need lease agreements or proof you control the land you wish to enroll. If you are already USDA Certified Organic, bring copies of your certification and Organic System Plan.

## Helpful Resources

- **USDA National Organic Program**  
[www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov)
- **National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service**  
[www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org)
- **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**  
[www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/organic.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/organic.shtml)

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.*

*To file a complaint of discrimination, complete, sign and mail a program discrimination complaint form, available at any USDA office location or online at [www.ascr.usda.gov](http://www.ascr.usda.gov), or write to: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410*

*Or call toll free at (866) 632-9992 (voice) to obtain additional information, the appropriate office or to request documents. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.*

*Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).*