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NRCS GRANTS TO HELP FARMERS, RANCHERS ADAPT TO DROUGHT

Applications for \$5 Million in Conservation Innovation Grants Due Oct. 15.

LINCOLN, Oct. 1, 2012 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the availability of up to \$5 million in grants to evaluate and demonstrate agricultural practices that help farmers and ranchers adapt to drought. NRCS is taking applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to help producers build resiliency into their production systems so they can adapt to climatic extremes, such as the historic drought impacting the nation.

Nebraska NRCS State Conservationist Craig Derickson said, "Nebraska is experiencing one of the most severe droughts since the dust bowl. NRCS wants to assist with the development of innovative methods to help farmers and ranchers cope with dry conditions."

NRCS is offering the grants to partnering entities to evaluate innovative, field-based conservation technologies and approaches. These technologies and/or approaches should lead to improvements such as enhancing the water-holding capacity in soils and installing drought-tolerant grazing systems, which will help farms and ranches become more resilient to drought.

"Severe drought conditions across the U.S. have greatly impacted the livelihood of our farmers and ranchers," said NRCS Chief Dave White. "Conservation Innovation Grants allow us to generate and deploy as soon as possible cutting-edge ideas that help farmers and ranchers run sustainable and profitable operations."

Grant applications are due **Oct. 15, 2012**. Private individuals, Tribes, local and state governments and non-governmental organizations can apply.

Funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process for projects lasting for one to three years. Apply electronically at www.grants.gov or contact the NRCS National CIG office at (703) 235-8065.

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NRCS is especially interested in projects that demonstrate:

- Cropping or grazing systems that increase resiliency to drought through improved soil health;
- Increases in available soil water holding capacity by enhancing organic matter with reduced tillage, cover crops and organic amendments;
- Improvements in water use efficiency for agricultural production;
- Coordination with NRCS Plant Material Centers in using drought resistant plants and practices;
- Recommendations for appropriate nutrient management following an extended drought;
- Analysis on a regional basis of how agricultural production and conservation systems fared during drought conditions;
- Agricultural approaches that flourished in low-precipitation areas;
- Traditional/historical production practices that have proven effective in dealing with drought;
- Alternative feeding systems for confined animal operations that incorporate novel drought-tolerant feedstocks;
- Alternative housing or cooling systems for improved energy efficiency and better climate control in confined animal operations; and
- Technologies that reduce water use in confined animal operations.

View the complete Announcement of Program Funding at www.grants.gov or http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1048671.pdf.

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