



Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401-4604

Phone: 785-823-4500
FAX: 785-823-4540
www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov

December 10, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-13-24

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Fiscal Year 2013 National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

- Action required by:** February 15, 2013 (Field Offices [FOs])
April 15, 2013
- Action required by:** March 1, 2013 (Area Offices [AOs])
April 30, 2013
- Action required by:** March 8, 2013 (State Office [SO])

Purpose. To provide guidance for administering the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (NSHTI)

Expiration Date. September 30, 2014

Background

Through the NSHTI, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will assist producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. The initiative has the potential to assist producers in addressing a resource concern by improving plant quality, improving soil quality, and reducing nutrient and pesticide transport.

The seasonal high tunnel practice is gaining recognition in many populated or urbanized areas. NRCS must consider and support all producers who submit an application regardless of where their operation is located. It is important to note that general program eligibility is not limited based on zoning. There is a common misconception that areas zoned as “urban” or “residential” (or other similar zoning types) are not eligible based on the zoning classification. However, while the applicant and land may meet program eligibility requirements, zoning may restrict a participant from installing certain practices. Participants who carry out conservation practices are responsible for

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson, Volkman

obtaining the authorities, rights, easements, permits, or other approvals necessary for the implementation, operation, and maintenance of the conservation practices in keeping with the applicable laws and regulations.

FOs will accept applications on a continuous basis. All eligible applications will be ranked in the Programs Contracts System (ProTracts) Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT).

Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and Conservation Practices

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and conservation practices are available in Attachment 1.

Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) are not offered as part of the NSHTI in FY 2013.

Screening Criteria

No screening criteria is used to support this initiative.

ProTracts Ranking Tool

The ProTracts fund code for the NSHTI is "FY13 Seasonal High Tunnels."

National ranking questions are consistent for all EQIP applications; however, only questions 2b, 2c, 5a, 5b, 7d, 7e, 7f, 9a, 9b, and 9c apply to the NSHTI. All other national questions shall be answered "No." Refer to bulletin KS300-13-19 for additional guidance on answering national questions.

A copy of the state and local ranking questions are provided in Attachment 2.

All eligible applications shall be entered into the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI). All answers available on the CPGI report will be used to answer the corresponding question on the ProTracts AERT. The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts.

Deadlines

Although applications for EQIP are accepted continuously, the FY 2013 application evaluation period cutoff date for NSHTI applications has been set for January 18, 2013. Should funds remain after approvals are made, an additional application evaluation period cutoff date will be announced.

FOs will have conservation plans and application rankings completed by February 15, 2013.

AOs will ensure peer reviews of rankings have been completed by March 1, 2013.

The SO Programs Staff will make funding decisions by March 8, 2013.

All approved applications and documentation will be entered in electronic contracts (eContracts) by April 15, 2013.

Assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will ensure that all contracts have been obligated in ProTracts by April 30, 2013.

Practice Clarification

As in previous years, the maximum practice extent for Conservation Practice (CP) 798, Seasonal High Tunnel, eligible for financial assistance shall be 2,178 square feet per **agricultural operation** for the duration of the interim practice pilot which has been extended one year. This may be single or multiple structures for a maximum of 2,178 square feet coverage. Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 502, Section 502.0, defines an agricultural operation as “. . . a parcel or parcels of land whether contiguous or noncontiguous, constituting a cohesive management unit for agricultural purposes.”

NOTE: When a participant with cropped land signs up for CP 441, Irrigation System, Microirrigation, and does not have the required Division of Water Resources reports or Farm Service Agency records verifying that they have met the two out of the last five years irrigation requirement, they will need to provide the FO with adequate documentation of irrigation history. The supervisory district conservationist and district conservationist will use his/her best professional judgment and document their decision in the case file.

Contact: Please forward questions through established channels, to Chad G. Volkman, Resource Conservationist, at chad.volkman@ks.usda.gov or call (785)823-4568.

(Signed) JAMES J. KRUEGER, ACTING FOR

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments