

Attachment E:

Key Terms and Definitions:

AMS: Agricultural Marketing Service.

NOP: (a) The National Organic Program authorized by the Act for the purpose of implementing its provisions. 7 CFR Part 205
(b) 2008 Statute, Section 1240A: “The term ‘national organic program’ means the national organic program established under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et. seq.)”.

OSP: (a) “A plan of management of an organic production or handling operation that has been agreed to by the producer or handler and the certifying agent and that includes written plans concerning all aspects of agricultural production or handling described in the Act and the regulations in subpart C of this part.” 7CFR Part 205”.
(b) 2008 Statute, Section 1240A: “The term ‘organic system plan’ means an organic plan approved under the national organic program.

Organic production: A production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.

Talking Points:

Information about the AMS, NOP and OSP requirements can be found at:

www.ams.usda.gov/NOP/.

Organic Plan Certification:

AMS administers two cost-share assistance programs: The National Organic Certification Cost-Share Assistance Program is available to producers and handlers in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and U.S. territories. The Agricultural Management Assistance Cost-Share Program is available to producers in 16 States (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming). Participants in either program may be reimbursed for up to 75% of the costs incurred in obtaining or continuing organic certification, not to exceed \$750 annually. These funds may only be used to reimburse producers for fees charged by accredited certifying agents for maintaining or continuing certification. The 2008 Farm Bill statute prohibits the use of EQIP program support to pay for any part of the costs associated with NOP certification nor is NRCS allowed to participate in any activity associated with the NOP certification process. AMS does not provide cost-share or financial assistance to assist producers for plan development or implementation of practices associated with the plan which can be supported through EQIP. NRCS may provide assistance through conservation planning and program support to help producers meet the requirements of the NOP.

AMS Organic Plan Standards:

The National Organic Program regulations require certified organic producers to complete and adhere to an organic system plan (OSP) that has been approved by a certifying agent. The organic system plan serves as the basis for determining whether the operation is in compliance with the NOP. The preamble to the NOP regulations describes in detail, 6 components to be included in an OSP. The components that must be addressed in the OSP include:

1. Practices and procedures
2. Identification and characterization of each input substance
3. Identification of monitoring techniques to verify implementation of the OSP
4. Explanation of the recordkeeping system
5. Management practices and physical barriers to prevent commingling of organic and nonorganic products
6. Additional information deemed necessary by the certifying agent.

Certified organic producers and those in transition to organic production may receive technical assistance and compete for financial assistance to implement practices that are consistent with

NOP regulations, address priority resource concerns and meet FOTG requirements. Certified organic producers may compete for EQIP financial assistance to continue and/or expand the conservation practices in the OSP. Producers in transition to certified organic production may also compete for financial assistance to begin or continue the implementation of conservation practices that are consistent with NOP practice standards. Note, AMS does not provide oversight nor is involvement of a certifying agent required for producers who are transitioning to organic. AMS encourages producers to work with agencies like NRCS and certifying agents to help with planning and implementation of practices which support efforts to transition to organic and to help meet NOP certification requirements. Some certifying organizations and agents have also developed widely accepted OSP plan “templates” which assist producers identify practices needed to be installed to meet NOP requirements. NRCS developed conservation plans may be used by producers to help support their efforts to become certified, but may not be used as a “replacement” for a plan to address legal requirements of the NOP.

EQIP Program Support of National Organic Standards NRCS Resource Concerns/Practices/NOP Requirements

Practice Selection Guidance:

The following guidance is provided to help NRCS planners and program participants develop conservation plans to support EQIP program contracts associated with meeting National Organic Program (NOP) requirements of the 2008 Farm Bill. Specifically this chart is intended to help planners identify which NRCS natural resource concerns may be associated with requirements of NOP. Selection of appropriate conservation practices that may be appropriate to address the identified organic resource need should be based upon alternatives developed through conservation planning, practice purpose and definition, and provisions of the statute related to organic production. The NOP and Organic System Plan (OSP) established by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) provides additional specific guidance related to conservation practices that can assist with organic production systems. This information is not intended to establish a requirement for selection of conservation practices, but provides guidance to producers and planners for selection of practices to help meet regulatory requirements. Recommendations to support appropriate selection of practices to support organic production or transition to organic must utilize the NRCS conservation planning process and decisions by the producer. The 2008 Farm Bill established specific authority for EQIP program support of eligible producers to assist with installation of eligible conservation practices which support organic production (OSP) or transition to organic production. Along with the locally-led process and State Technical Committee input, the following information may be used to assist State Conservationists select and approve conservation practices which directly relate to organic production systems and meet program and FOTG standards. Conservation practices which do not directly relate to the purpose and intent of statute for support of organic systems should not be approved for program support or included in ranking systems associated with organic funding through EQIP.

General information about the NOP regulations can be found at: www.ams.usda.gov/NOP/.

NOP Rule	NOP Standard – Organic Farm Plan	Potential NRCS Resource Concern Category
205.203	<p><u>Soil fertility and crop nutrient management standard:</u> This section of the NOP standard deals with cultural tillage practices, cultivation, soil conditions, amendments, erosion, cover vegetation, manure management, fertility, compost and similar practices. Details regarding these requirements can be found in Subpart C of the NOP Standards.</p>	<p>Soil Condition Plant Condition Soil Erosion Water Quality</p>
205.204	<p><u>Seeds and planting stock practice standard:</u> This section of the NOP deals with organic seeds and plants. Generally, it is not appropriate to use EQIP program support for planting related only to production without a conservation purpose or benefit. However, similar to traditional farming practices, EQIP can provide support for improved management of irrigation systems for water conservation, manage runoff to improve water quality or to control erosion on crop fields.</p>	<p>Air Quality Soil Condition Soil Erosion Water Quality Water Quantity</p>

205.205	<u>Crop rotation practice standard:</u> This section of the NOP includes requirements for use of cover crops, fertility management, green manure crops, composting practices, residue management, soil organic improvements and erosion control.	Soil Condition Soil Erosion Domestic Animals Plant Condition Water Quality
205.206	<u>Crop pest, weed, and disease management practice standard:</u> This section of the NOP includes requirements for crop rotation, weed and disease control related to crop health, nutrient management, biological controls for pests and related issues. While EQIP prohibits support for weed/pest control as a stand alone practice related to crop production, other programmatic opportunities may exist.	Soil Condition Plant Condition Water Quality
NOP Rule	<u>NOP Standard – Organic Livestock Production Plan</u>	Potential NRCS Resource Concern Category
205.237	<u>Livestock Feed:</u> This section of the NOP addresses feed management including management of supplements, pasture and forage supplies.	Domestic Animal
205.238 205.239	<u>Livestock health care practice standard and, Livestock living conditions:</u> This section of the NOP addresses management, movement and care of livestock including pasture/range conditions, sanitation, etc.	Domestic Animals Plant Condition Water Quality

Note: Some certifying organizations and agents have also developed widely accepted OSP plan “templates” which assist producers identify practices needed to be installed to meet NOP requirements. These templates closely follow requirements of the NOP and help identify specific practices which are likely to be included in an OSP plan. An example of a certifying organization OSP template can be found at: <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/OSPtemplates.html>.