



ORGANIC EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program for Organic Production

Oregon NRCS - December 2009

Conservation assistance and funding is available through the organic signup under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

You may be eligible to receive payment and technical expertise for the conservation work you want to do on your land.

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Overview

Program funding is available to organic producers and those transitioning to organic production in Oregon. This voluntary financial and technical assistance is available through the Organic signup of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical expertise to growers and landowners who want to plan and install measures to protect the soil, water, air and other natural resources on their working land. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers EQIP.

The Organic EQIP signup is open to organic producers and those transitioning to organic production.

More information about EQIP and Organic EQIP can be found on the Oregon NRCS Web site under programs at: <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Conservation Planning

To participate, producers must work with NRCS to identify and plan conservation measures. NRCS works with farmers and ranchers to develop conservation plans that address the producers' conservation goals.

Conservation goals are highly individual and may include transitioning to organic agriculture (or boosting pollinator populations, increasing biodiversity including soil-borne organisms, enhancing water quality, controlling invasive species or dozens of other resource-enhancing possibilities).

All information provided to NRCS for conservation planning purposes is strictly confidential.

The conservation plan becomes the basis for the EQIP application. Those who have previously developed a conservation plan with NRCS will already have the conservation planning step completed. Those who have not previously participated in NRCS programs should schedule a meeting to discuss the options and develop a conservation plan before moving forward.

Conservation Practice Assistance

Practices funded through the 2010 Organic EQIP signup include:

- Conservation Crop Rotation,
- Cover Crops,
- Nutrient Management,
- Pest Management,
- Prescribed Grazing,
- Forage Harvest Management and more

Growers may not enroll in EQIP to receive payments for conservation work they have already completed.

To view a full list of practices and associated payment rates, visit the Oregon EQIP Web site.

Growers who participate in the Organic EQIP signup may receive up to \$20,000 per year and are limited to a total of \$80,000 over a six-year period.

Historically Underserved Clients

EQIP provides a higher payment rate to historically underserved USDA program participants. These are:

- Beginning farmers or ranchers who have farmed for 10 or fewer years
- Limited resource farmers or ranchers who have:
 1. Direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and

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2. Total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years

- Applicants who are American Indian, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or Hispanic

For more information, contact your NRCS office or go to: http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/fy10/Hist_Underserved10.html.

Eligibility

Eligible land includes privately owned cropland, rangeland, pasture, and other working farm or ranch lands. An eligible applicant may be an individual or an entity that either has an Organic System Plan or is actively transitioning to organic production.

In addition, applicants must meet the following program eligibility requirements:

- Have ownership or control of the land for the duration of the proposed EQIP contract;
- Have a financial interest in the operation associated with the land;

- Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the Farm Bill;
- Provide a tax identification number (TIN) or social security number, as well as a listing of the percentage of interest for each individual and entity listed on a jointly owned business;
- Have an adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$1 million or less, unless two-thirds of that is derived from agriculture, ranching or forestry;
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements. (The overall payment limitation for EQIP is \$300,000 per person or legal entity over a 6-year period.)

Contact your local NRCS office for more details about eligibility.

Learn more about opportunities and incentives to conserve and improve the land.

Application Process

To apply, you will need to submit application materials. Interested applicants should contact the local NRCS office for application materials and more information.

Once the program cutoff date has passed, NRCS will evaluate and rank applications for funding based on program priorities. For a listing of Organic EQIP ranking questions, contact your NRCS office or visit the Oregon EQIP page.

Program Requirements

After an application is selected for funding, the producer enters into a program contract with the USDA. In order to receive program payments, activities in the contract must be completed. These activities may include practice installation as well as operational and maintenance activities. Program participants are expected to maintain any EQIP practice throughout its useful life, even after the contract is completed.

More Information

More information can be found at your USDA NRCS Service Center. Locate your local office in the Federal Government section of the telephone book or online at: <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Organic System Plan (OSP)

An OSP is a management plan for organic production or for an organic handling operation that has been agreed to by the producer or handler and the certifying agent. The OSP includes all written plans that govern all aspects of agricultural production or handling. Applicants for the Organic EQIP signup must submit a copy of their current OSP with their program application.

More information about developing an OSP can be found on the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Web site under the National Organic Program (NOP): www.ams.usda.gov.

Transitioning to Organic Production

Producers who are working toward organic certification must submit a self-certification letter stating that they agree to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an Organic System Plan.

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