

Fact Sheet - February 2012

Introduction

On January 15, 2009, the Federal Register, Volume 74, No.10, announced the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) rules and guidelines. The program has been reauthorized through 2012. It expands program purposes to include forest management, organic farming and energy conservation benefits. Payments are limited to \$300,000 per person or legal entity, unless a project has special environmental significance. The program requires specific portions of funding to be made available for Socially Disadvantaged participants and Beginning Farmers or Ranchers. The program continues the designation that requires 60 percent of overall funding go to livestock related practices.

Major Resource Needs

- Animal Waste Management
- Erosion Control
- Grazing Land Conservation
- Irrigation Water Conservation
- Air Quality
- Nutrient Management
- Wildlife Habitat
- Energy Conservation
- Reduced Conservation Tillage
- Control of Invasive Plants

Organic Farming

Organic farmers will now be qualified for pest management, nutrient management, forage harvest management, conservation crop rotation cover crop, and prescribe grazing. Under Organic Farming rules, payments are limited to \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 during any six-year period. NRCS is authorized to cancel a contract if the participant is receiving payments related to organic practices but is not pursuing organic certification or is not in compliance with the Organic Production Act of 1990.

Applications and Application Ranking

Applications for EQIP will be accepted at any time during the year. However, funding cycles will vary based on budgetary allocations. Applications are ranked based on overall cost effectiveness, how well it improves conservation.

Payment Limitations

The 2008 Act lowers the payment limitation for participants from \$450,000 to \$300,000 during any six-year period, except for projects having special environmental significance; in such cases the payments will be limited to \$450,000. For the purposes of applying the payment limitation and in accordance with the 2008 Act, the six-year period will include those payments made in fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Provides an increased payment rate to historically under served producers that include beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The Act provides advance payments, of up to 30 percent of the anticipated costs to be incurred for the purpose of purchasing materials or services to implement a conservation practice, to historically under served producers. It establishes a national target to set aside five percent of EQIP funds for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers and an additional five percent of EQIP funds for beginning farmers or ranchers.



Irrigation Provisions

For applications that include water conservation or irrigation efficiency conservation practices, the 2008 Act amendment also requires NRCS to give priority to applications that demonstrate a reduction in water use by the agricultural operation. As a condition of receiving a higher ranking with the grouping of water conservation applications, the producer agrees not to use any associated water savings to bring new land under irrigation production, excluding incidental land needed for efficient operations.

Program Priorities

The following national priorities, consistent with the statutory resource concerns that include soil, water, wildlife, air quality, and related resource concerns, will be used in EQIP implementation:

1. Reductions of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds; the reduction of surface and groundwater contamination; and the reduction of emissions, such as concentrated animal feeding operations.
2. Conservation of ground and surface water resources.
3. Reduction of emissions such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
4. Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land.
5. Promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation.

More Information

For more information regarding EQIP, visit the NRCS Texas website at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov or call the NRCS state office at 254.742.9800.

Helping People Help the Land

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.