

## About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

A part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the 2008 Farm Bill.

The conservation provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill will affect farmers for years to come. New provisions continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decade. Existing programs have been simplified and new programs created to address high priority environmental protection goals.

In addition to addressing a broad range of environmental goals, the 2008 Farm Bill includes increased financial assistance for new, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers.



Contact your local NRCS field office for more information and assistance.

## Contact NRCS:

### Massachusetts USDA Service Centers

Barnstable: 508-771-6476

Greenfield: 413-772-0384

Hadley: 413-585-1000

Holden: 508-829-4477

Pittsfield: 413-443-1776

West Wareham: 508-295-5151

Westford: 978-692-1904

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering a conservation program for Massachusetts greenhouse operations to implement water quality and water conservation practices.

In Massachusetts, NRCS ran a pilot program for greenhouse operations in limited areas from 2006 through 2008. The program has now been expanded to include greenhouse growers statewide.

For the first time ever, all commercial greenhouse operations in Massachusetts are eligible to participate. Growers can now receive technical and financial assistance for increasing efficiency of heating and irrigation systems through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## Conservation practices eligible for financial assistance

EQIP offers financial compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices that reduce water use and greenhouse emissions.

Eligible practices include reorganization or replacement of inefficient irrigation systems, tailwater recovery systems, and roof-runoff collection and storage structures.

In order to be eligible for funding, projects must result in water savings.



**Greenhouse Heat Management:** Energy / shade screens and horizontal air flow (HAF) systems provide temperature control and heat distribution for energy savings of 30 percent or more for greenhouses. An energy audit is required to be eligible for these practices.



**Closed (Zero Discharge) Irrigation Systems:** Examples of these systems include troughs, ebb-and-flow benches, flood floors, capillary mats, buoyant trays and V-bottom beds. A tailwater recovery system is required so that all runoff and leachate is collected and reused.



**Microirrigation Systems:** Used to efficiently deliver water in small frequent applications directly on or below the soil surface.



**Pumping Plants:** Pumping plants are used to pump water to a holding or pressure tank to provide water for small trickle irrigation systems. Costs include manifolds, valves, valve boxes and other essential parts.

## NRCS Conservation Programs for Greenhouses

### How do greenhouse operations impact our environment?

The greenhouse and nursery industries use a large amount of water, energy and agri-chemical products.

EQIP provides an opportunity to protect water quality and reduce stream and groundwater withdrawal, thereby protecting the commonwealth's natural resources.

NRCS can assist you to develop and implement a conservation plan that will help protect and conserve your land and natural resources.



### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.

### Who can apply?

- Greenhouse operators who earn at least \$1,000 annually from agricultural sales are eligible to apply.
- There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP, however, projects that address significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding.

### How do I apply?

- Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals to begin the program application process.
- Developing a conservation plan is the first step for applying to EQIP. A conservation plan will :
  - Identify immediate or potential problems that will result in resource degradation and lower production.
  - Protect soil, water, air and your land's productivity
  - Qualify you to apply for USDA conservation programs for implementing your conservation plan
- You will need to file several forms to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs.
  - Information and application forms are available on our website.

### When should I apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria for each program is available on our website.

Please call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information.

