

For Immediate Release

For more information
Mary Ann McQuinn
State Public Affairs Specialist
706 546-2069
mary.mcquinn@ga.usda.gov

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE ANNOUNCES A SECOND OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS TO IMPLEMENT CONSERVATION PRACTICES

INITIATIVE IN ITS THIRD YEAR

ATHENS, GA, (April 11, 2011) --- James E. Tillman, Sr., State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia, today announced that the NRCS will provide funding to help organic producers and those transitioning to organic production implement natural resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. Applications must be received by May 20, 2011.

Fiscal year (FY) 2011 marks the third year of the Organic Initiative for producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production. For example, organic producers may use the funding to plant cover crops, establish integrated pest management plans, or implement nutrient management systems consistent with organic certification standards.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000.

Organic Initiative funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program administered by NRCS that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. The 2008 Farm Bill provided for assistance specifically for organic farm operations and those converting to organic production.

Under Organic Initiative contracts, producers are paid 75 percent of the cost for the organic conservation measures they implement. Producers qualifying as beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers are paid 90 percent. The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

Producers interested in applying for Organic Initiative funding must submit applications through their local NRCS Service Center, which can be located through the Web site at

Helping People Help the Land

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, with the cutoff date set for May 20, 2011.

NRCS is celebrating 75 years helping people help the land. Since 1935, the NRCS conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and private landowners delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests.