

*For Immediate Release*

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## News Release

*Applications Due March 4, 2011*

### **FEDERAL CONSERVATION AGENCY CONDUCTING SIGN-UP FOR THE HIGH TUNNEL INITIATIVE**

ATHENS, GA, Feb.4, 2011 --James E. Tillman, Sr., State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Georgia today announced that the NRCS is accepting applications for the 2011 High Tunnel Pilot Study thru March 4. Georgia has designated \$100,000 for this initiative.

“The purpose of the study is to determine the conservation benefits of high tunnels; A benefit to the farmer is the extension of the growing season allowing them to plant and harvest earlier and later during the growing year,” Tillman said.

NRCS will fund one high tunnel per farm/applicant. The maximum size of high tunnels erected for the study is 2,178 sq. ft. Reimbursement will be made after the structure is completely constructed and inspected by NRCS personnel. The applicant agrees to maintain the structure and a record system for three years.

High tunnels must be constructed after the application has been approved and must comply with the standards and specifications in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

Funded via the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS will provide technical and financial assistance through the high tunnel pilot initiative.

High tunnels, sometimes known as hoop houses, help small farmers extend their growing season allowing them to generate income as the temperature gets colder in the fall and winter. Cost-share rates are 75 percent for general applicants and 90 percent for historically underserved applicants.

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High tunnels are used year-round in warmer parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers – a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers. Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain and move.

To sign up or learn more about the project, contact your local NRCS office. Electronic applications can be found at: [www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov)

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