

**Fact Sheet:  
Environmental Quality  
Incentives Program  
Air Quality Initiative**

JANUARY 2012

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**Overview**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that offers financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide assistance to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, energy conservation, and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. In addition, EQIP can help producers meet federal, state, Tribal and local environmental regulations.

**Air Quality Initiative**

The 2008 Farm Bill includes provisions for the use of EQIP to assist producers with air quality resource concerns and to meet federal, state, and local regulatory requirements. The Air Quality Initiative offers financial assistance to address air quality concerns and its impacts associated with greenhouse gases (GHG) in designated high priority geographic locations throughout the nation.

In 2012, the program is designed to help producers meet air quality compliance requirements, and provide opportunities to install conservation practices, such as cover crops, dust control measures and combustion system improvements.

**Eligibility**

Eligible applicants include individuals, legal entities, Indian Tribes or joint operations engaged in agricultural production. Producers who grow agricultural commodities on

eligible land and have natural resource concerns which may be addressed by air quality practices, and are located in designated non-attainment areas may participate in the Air Quality Initiative.

Eligible producers interested in entering into a financial assistance agreement with NRCS for EQIP assistance may file an application at their local USDA Service Center at any time.

Applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer and have control of eligible land for the term of the proposed contract period.
- Be in compliance with the provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including the provisions for sharing EQIP payments on a fair and equitable basis.
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements, as specified in the 2008 Farm Bill.
- Be in compliance with adjusted gross income requirements of the 2008 Farm Bill.

**How EQIP Works**

NRCS staff will work with the applicant to develop a conservation plan and an EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the EQIP contract between NRCS and the participant.



NRCS may also provide financial assistance to participants for conservation planning services through a Technical Service Provider (TSP). These services are utilized to develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) which will be included in the plan of operations as they provide in depth analysis of specific resource concerns.

Applications submitted for the Air Quality Initiative are accepted on a continuous basis throughout the year. Applications are evaluated and ranked according to environmental benefits expected through implementation of approved conservation practices.

For fiscal year 2012, NRCS has established application deadlines where eligible applications will be ranked and considered for funding as follows:

- Application Period 1  
Submission Deadline: Friday,  
February 3, 2012
- Application Period 2  
Submission Deadline: Friday,  
March 30, 2012

Applications submitted after the deadlines will be evaluated and considered for later funding opportunities.

### ***Payment Limitations***

Program payments are limited to \$300,000 a person or entity for all contracts entered into during any six-year period. This limitation includes unpaid prior year contract obligations as of October 1, 2008, as well as new contract obligations. For the purpose of applying this requirement, the six-year period will include those payments made in fiscal years 2009-2014. Payments received for technical assistance are excluded from this limitation.

### ***More Information***

For more information and updates about the EQIP Initiatives and other 2008 Farm Bill topics, please visit the NRCS website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/) .