

Idaho Bulletin: 300-12-7

Subject: LTP- EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

Date: November 29, 2011

Action Required By: June 22, 2012

Purpose. To provide guidance to support the Fiscal Year 2012 Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Expiration Date. September 30, 2012

Background. Through the EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, NRCS will assist producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner by addressing identified resource concerns. Additionally, the initiative has the potential to improve air quality through reduced transportation inputs, and reduce energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce.

Through this initiative, NRCS will assist producers to:

- 1) Implement practice 798 - Seasonal Tunnel System for Crops, and associated practices. The maximum practice extent for a Seasonal High Tunnel eligible for practice payment is five percent of an acre which is 2178 sq ft per farming operation.
- 2) Develop one of the following Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) on land where a seasonal high tunnel is currently used: Nutrient Management Plan (104), Integrated Pest Management Plan (114), Irrigation Water Management Plan (118), and Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (138).

Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis. Three application periods will be announced for FY 2012. These periods coincide with the Organic Initiative and the Energy Initiative.

Period 1 – Application Cutoff is February 3, 2012

Eligibility and Ranking Complete by February 10, 2012

Period 2 – Application Cutoff is March 30, 2012

Eligibility and Ranking Complete by April 6, 2012

Period 3 – Application Cutoff is June 1, 2012

Eligibility and Ranking Complete by June 8, 2012

The **obligation deadline** for all Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative contracts is **Friday, June 22, 2012**.

Explanation. The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative is one of three FY 2012 initiatives offered in Idaho that will largely be managed at a National level. All States will announce three application periods, as identified above. Prospective applicants may apply for the initiative on a continuous basis and those applicants who are eligible by the ‘Eligibility and Ranking’ deadline will be pre-approved. Applications for Conservation Activity Plans shall not be ranked; all other eligible applications must be ranked by the ‘Eligibility & Ranking’ deadline for the associated application period. State Office Programs staff will then submit a request to Headquarters for an allocation to fund all pre-approved applications based on the cost estimates entered in ProTracts.

It is critical that Field Office staff assess eligibility, rank, and enter cost estimates by these deadlines. Applications that cannot be determined eligible by the ‘Eligibility & Ranking’ dates outlined above should remain in ‘Pending’ status and be considered for funding in the subsequent application period(s).

Please complete the following items for all Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative applications as soon as they are received:

- Enter the application in ProTracts within the ‘Seasonal High Tunnel’ funding pool.
 - Applications for one of the four CAP’s offered under this initiative should be assigned the ‘planning’ application type.
 - Applications for implementation of Seasonal High Tunnels and associated conservation practices should be assigned the ‘conventional’ application type.
- Update eligibility in ProTracts (AD-1026, CCC-931, and CCC-901 or CCC-902 must be on file). Send ‘pending’ letter if eligibility is not current.
- Enter Direct Deposit (SF-1199A) and ensure that the Vendor Code is **Active** in Protracts.
- Enter Dun and Bradstreet Number (DUNS) for applications submitted by entities and joint operations using an Employer Identification Number (EIN).
- Enter the contract estimated cost in ProTracts.
- Ensure applicants that have self-certified as Historically Underserved on the NRCS-CPA-1200 complete the HU worksheet (attached).
- For applications containing engineering practices, assure NRCS personnel with the proper “Planning” and “Design” engineering job approval authority have reviewed the proposed conservation practices.
- Inform the applicant what records will be required should their control of land self-certification be selected for an annual 5% spot check.

This initiative is eligible on cropland only, and is **not limited** to organic or transitioning to organic operations.

Please refer to the attached table for more information regarding the list of conservation practices approved for use within the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative and the nationally identified resource concerns associated with each practice. All Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative contracts (with the exception of CAP contracts) must include the practice 798 – Seasonal Tunnel System for Crops. The other conservation practices offered within the initiative are considered complimentary to address the

existing resource concerns on the land where the seasonal high tunnel will be used.

Contact. Please contact your Area Farm Bill Specialist if you have any questions.

/s/ Geno Bulzomi Acting for

Jeffery Burwell
State Conservationist

Attachment: A - Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative Conservation Practices and CAP's