



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Accepting Applications through Feb. 15, 2013, for the Conservation Innovation Grant – Greenhouse Gas Project in Illinois

Champaign, IL – Agricultural producers across Illinois who agree to implement conservation practices under the new Environmental Quality Incentives Program Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Initiative have until February 15, 2013 to submit applications for financial assistance.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with Delta Institute, American Farmland Trust, and the Conservation Technology Information Center, is making funds available to promote innovative nutrient management practices and whole-farm accounting technologies as part of a 3-state Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG). The funding is available for farmers in all Illinois counties. Applicants can sign up at their local USDA NRCS field service center.

Funding will be available to eligible landowners through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS will provide technical and financial assistance for implementing the core practices of Nutrient Management and Cover Crops as well as supporting conservation practices for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with farming operations. Land and producer eligibility, adjusted gross income, and all other program criteria for participation must be met to participate in this initiative. Agricultural lands are eligible for enrollment in the initiative.

The main focus for the CIG project is to lower on-farm emissions through increased nutrient use efficiency. The goals of the project include encouraging nutrient management practices, establishing cover crops, developing data for estimating GHG emission reductions, field testing other GHG-reducing practices and producing user-friendly technology to help producers access environmental markets. Priority applicants will work with the Chicago-based Delta Institute to enter basic field management data such as planting, fertilizer, irrigation, harvest, and tillage practices into COMET-FARM, a secure online tool developed by USDA and Colorado State University. Applicants with calculated nitrous oxide (N₂O) emission reductions may be eligible for additional payments through a voluntary credit trading program.

All the core and supporting practices, including nutrient management, cover crops, crop rotations, and continuous no-till are designed to produce multiple benefits for farmers including improved soil health and reduced erosion. Additional information about the EQIP GHG Initiative and the CIG project is available at <http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/index.html>. For application procedures contact your local NRCS field Office.

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