

EQIP Special Initiative for Organic Production



Overview

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) provided funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) specifically to help organic farmers and agricultural producers transition to organic farming.

- Organic food sales remain the fastest growing sector in the food industry, swelling by 18 percent in 2007.
- Organic food sales more than tripled, to \$1.7 billion in 2007 from \$393 million in 2002, according to new data released by USDA's Agriculture Census.

In 2009, Idaho NRCS received 36 applications totalling approximately \$400,000.

March 12 is the cutoff date for Organic EQIP applications

Conservation planning assistance

Whether your goals include transitioning to organic agriculture or boosting pollinator populations, increasing biodiversity of soil-borne organisms, enhancing water quality, controlling invasive species, or dozens of other resource-enhancing possibilities, conservation planning can help you protect your resources.

For more than 70 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers develop conservation plans to meet their environmental and economic goals and plan for the protection of soil, water, air, plant, and wildlife resources.

Conservation plans are individualized; NRCS conservationists visit your farm and work with you to develop a conservation plan based on your farm goals. The plan includes a timeline to implement conservation practices, which are science-based treatments that address specific resource concerns. Conservation planning assistance is free and does not require participation in financial programs.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance is available to producers to implement a variety of conservation practices following NRCS standards and specifications. There are 280 conservation practice components used to treat identified resource concerns.

Applicants who are organic producers or are transitioning to organic production may find these six conservation practices helpful in meeting provisions of an Organic System Plan: Crop Rotation; Cover Crops; Nutrient Management; Pest Management; Prescribed Grazing; and Forage Harvest Management.

How to get started

Visit your local USDA Service Center or NRCS field office.

Submit an application for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to an NRCS field office.

Note: March 12 is the cutoff date for 2010 Organic EQIP applications.

If you are already a certified organic grower:

You must show proof of farm ownership and a copy of your organic system plan.

If you are transitioning to organic production:

You must show proof of farm ownership and supply a self-certification letter that states you “agree to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan.” (The NRCS can provide a template for the self-certification letter if needed.)



Eligibility Requirements

- a) Be an agricultural operation that produces at least \$1,000 in agricultural products in 2 of the last 5 years or has IRS Schedule F form showing profit or loss from a farm operation
- b) Must own, or have control of the land (by lease or rental agreement) for length of contract
- c) Must be actively engaged in farm operation
- d) May be an individual, entity or joint operation
- e) Be registered in the USDA Service Center Information Database (SCIMS)
- f) Be certified as organic according to the National Organic Program OR be in the process of transitioning to organic production

Farms Under \$5,000 in Revenue Per Year:

Producers who sell less than \$5,000 a year may use EQIP as part of their transition to organic certification. However, they are required to implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an Organic System Plan (OSP) just like producers who are already certified.

Other programs available

Producers who have farmed less than 10 years are considered beginning farmers or ranchers and can receive up to 75% of conservation practice costs. Producers with limited financial resources (defined on a county-by-county basis) can receive up to 90% of conservation practice costs.

NRCS administers many conservation programs to improve and conserve natural resources, enhance wildlife habitat and help people help the land.

Confidentiality

All information provided to NRCS for conservation planning purposes is strictly confidential.

For more information on NRCS

Visit our web site at www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/

For more information on conservation practices, go to section IV of the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide look for the link under ‘Quick Access’ on Idaho NRCS main page.

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