

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



## Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers technical and financial assistance to help producers address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and improved or created wildlife habitat.

## Benefits

Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement improvements known as conservation practices. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving agricultural operations today.

## Program at a Glance

NRCS will help you develop a conservation plan that meets your goals and vision. This plan becomes a roadmap for selecting the right conservation practices for your land. NRCS offers about 200 unique practices designed for working farms, ranches and forests.

EQIP is not a “cost-share” program. Practice payment rates are set each fiscal year and posted online at [www.va.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov). EQIP contracts run from one to 10 years and are limited to \$450,000 per contract.

Eligible producers may receive financial assistance payments to implement approved conservation practices on eligible land or to help in the development of a Conservation Planning Activity (CPA), Design and Implementation Activity (DIA)/Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA) to address specific land use issues.

You receive payments on completed practices or activities identified in an EQIP contract that meet NRCS standards.



*New and beginning farmers can get financial assistance for up to 90 percent of the costs of installing conservation practices.*

## Who is Eligible?

Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who own or rent agricultural or nonindustrial forest land are eligible. EQIP assistance can be used on all types of agricultural operations, including:

- Conventional and organic
- Specialty crops and commodity crops
- Forestry and wildlife
- Livestock operations

## Special Fund Pools

Fifteen percent of all EQIP funds have been set aside to assist historically underserved clients. Landowners certify they belong to one of these groups. Veterans who are beginning farmers can also receive preference in applying for 2018 Farm Bill programs.

New and beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran and limited-resource farmers can receive financial assistance payments of up to 90 percent of the costs for installing conservation practices. The 2018 Farm Bill



## Who Can Apply

EQIP applications are ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Applicants must:

Control or own eligible agricultural or forest land.

Be engaged in agriculture or forestry and have a farm number and tract established with the Farm Service Agency.

Have an adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than \$900,000 (Federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes are exempt).

Comply with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

Develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations that addresses at least one natural resource concern.



requires that an advance payment option be offered to historically underserved (HU) producers. This advance payment option allows HU participants to receive 50 percent in advance for purchasing materials or supplies/ services required for practice implementation.

## 2022 Resource Concerns

EQIP eligible land includes crop, range, pasture, non-industrial private forest and other farm or ranch lands. Our 2022 EQIP offerings focus on the resource concerns listed below. The 2018 Farm Bill also adds potential resource concerns for beneficial cost-effective operation changes.

**Livestock Operations.** You can receive assistance with animal waste storage and handling facilities for livestock (including dairy, swine, and poultry) and efficient application of organic nutrients.

A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is required when payment is for a waste facility. Funding is available to assist with the development of a CNMP.

**Sample practices:** *Waste Storage Facility, Animal Mortality Facility, Nutrient Management, Heavy Use Area Protection, Fencing.*

**Grazing Lands.** Assistance is available for planning and implementing rotational grazing systems, excluding livestock from streams, establishing riparian buffers and applying nutrients more efficiently. For prescribed grazing payments, all components of the plan must be in place and livestock managed according to the plan.

**Sample practices:** *Access Control & Fencing, Heavy Use Area, Pasture & Hayland Planting, Prescribed Grazing, Riparian Buffers, Nutrient Management, Water Troughs & Pipelines.*



**Cropland.** You can get assistance for reducing sheet and rill erosion, eliminating gully erosion, protecting surface and groundwater quality and improving soil quality via crop



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rotations, cover crops, high-residue crop production and no-till with erosion control practices. Payments may only be made to applicants who have not adopted the practice on fields that will be in the contract.

**Sample practices:** *Residue & Tillage Management, Cover Crop, Grassed Waterways, Field Border, Nutrient Management.*



**Organic Farming Initiative.** Assistance is available for current certified organic producers and those transitioning to organic farming. This initiative addresses soil, water, air, plant, animal, and energy conservation concerns. A \$140,000 payment limit is placed on applications within this special pool.

**Sample practices:** *Nutrient Management (Organic), Prescribed Grazing, Residue & Tillage Management.*

**Longleaf Pine.** Agricultural producers and forest landowners can get help establishing and maintaining Longleaf Pine forests in targeted counties within its historical range in Southeastern Virginia.

**Sample practices:** *Tree Establishment, Prescribed Burning, Herbicide Application, Pre-Commercial Thinning, Firebreaks.*

## How to Apply

Apply at your local USDA Service Center, which can be found online at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator). Applications for EQIP financial assistance are accepted throughout the year, but Virginia sets specific state deadlines for ranking and funding. If your application is ranked and selected, you will enter into a contract with NRCS to receive financial assistance for the cost of implementing conservation practices.

## More Information

For more information, visit [nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill](https://nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill) or [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov).

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