



Navigating Urban Agriculture Programs in Wisconsin



Food insecurity is an everyday reality for many urban communities across the United States. About 23.5 million people in communities nationwide are lacking food access, and 15.8 million children are food insecure, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS). Many low-income urban areas lack retail grocery stores and access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Today, 15 percent of the world's food is grown in urban areas, according to the ERS. With most of the world's population residing in cities, this statistic will likely continue to increase. Urban agriculture is part of the rising local food movement aimed at reducing the distance food must travel from farm to table.

If a producer chooses to take the next step towards improving their operation, we can work together to develop a conservation plan. By integrating suggested conservation practices into the producer's overall objectives, we can help them reach their production and conservation goals.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. Whether you measure your farm in terms of square feet or acres, NRCS can provide assistance with improving water and air quality, conserving ground and surface water, increasing soil health and reducing soil erosion and sedimentation, improving or creating wildlife habitat, and mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility. Our financial assistance can cover part of the costs of implementing conservation practices. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving the long-term health of your operation.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to reward growers who are already doing a baseline level of conservation on their operation, while also incentivizing them to adopt additional conservation activities that go above and beyond regular NRCS conservation practice standards. CSP is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship.



What is Urban Agriculture?

Urban or small-scale agriculture includes the cultivation, processing and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban areas.

Community gardens, Tribal communities and small towns may also be included.



Urban farmers are addressing food access issues by growing local, healthy foods for their communities. Urban farms empower people to help solve hunger and poverty issues within their community by changing the way people look at what and how they eat, providing jobs and skills training while beautifying and unifying neighborhoods. Many farms also teach local residents how to prepare fresh ingredients for healthy meals.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) serves a diverse range of agriculture, spanning from large to small-scale operations, conventional to organic farming, and rural to urban settings. As American agriculture continues to grow in new directions, the conservation assistance provided by the NRCS expands with it. By bringing cultivation and opportunity to both rural and urban areas, we address the many needs of producers with technical and financial assistance. Find your nearest Service Center at www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

NRCS offers Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) at no cost to the producers we serve. Our goal is to provide personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to help them make informed decisions.

Assistance Available for Producers

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance with conservation practices including (but not limited to):

- *Weed & pest management*
- *Soil health*
- *Composting facilities*
- *Pollinator habitat*
- *High tunnels*
- *Raised beds*
- *Irrigation*



Application Process

Follow this step-by-step guide detailing the process of applying for NRCS financial assistance:

(1) Establish a Customer Record with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

If this is the first time you have participated in USDA programs, you will need to make an appointment with the FSA or NRCS at your local USDA Service Center to establish eligibility and farm records. Find your nearest Service Center at www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center

Be prepared to provide the following documentation:

- The lease or other agreement or copy of the deed to the property showing control of the land you wish to enroll.
- Your Tax ID number and contact information. If applying as an entity or joint operation (e.g., LLC, Corporation), also be prepared to provide documents that describe the entity or partnership and establish signature authority (e.g., articles of incorporation, bylaws, partnership paperwork).

(2) Establish Eligibility for USDA Programs

In order to apply for NRCS programs, individuals must complete eligibility requirements:

- **Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Determination**, Form AD-1026.
- **Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Statement**, Form CCC-941. Eligibility for certain NRCS programs requires an AGI of less than \$900,000/year on average.
- **Farm Operation Plan**, Form CCC-902. FSA will collect producer eligibility information about NRCS and FSA program customers. In order for FSA to properly complete CCC-902, be sure to communicate that you are completing this to apply for NRCS financial assistance. Even if you have been in NRCS programs in the past, verify that you have this form completed correctly and in 'Determined' status.
- **Member's Information**, Form CCC-901. Only required for establishing farm records for an entity, not needed for individuals. Note: All members of an entity must be listed on the CCC-901 and complete a CCC-941 reflecting their personal AGI.

Please start the process early to ensure your records and eligibility are current prior to any program sign-up deadlines.



(3) Apply for CSP or EQIP

Prior to program sign-up deadline, you will need to:

- Complete and sign a Conservation Program Application, NRCS-CPA-1200.
- Review the Conservation Program Contract Appendix, NRCS-CPA-1202-CPC, which explains the terms and conditions of NRCS program contracts.
- Complete a Direct Deposit Form (SF-1199A). All NRCS program payments are made via direct deposit.

(4) Complete the Program Application and Contracting Process

Conservation Planners with the NRCS will help you navigate through the completion of your final application documents:

- Conservation Plan
- Conservation Plan/Schedule of Operations
- Application Ranking Summary

If your application is selected for funding, you will need to sign a Conservation Program Contract, NRCS-CPA-1202.

IMPORTANT: Do not start any financially assisted conservation practice or activity before your Conservation Program contract is fully executed by NRCS, unless NRCS approves a waiver.



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