



# NRCS and Local Farmers Markets

COLORADO



Farmers markets provide small farmers and the fresh produce community an opportunity to sell what they grow, raise or produce on their farm.

## About NRCS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a non-regulatory federal agency that works with ag producers, large and small, to help them implement sound scientific conservation measures into their ag operation which can help them reach their land-use and natural resource goals, and have positive impacts on their bottom line.

NRCS staff are dedicated to natural resource conservation. They live and work in the communities they service, providing technical expertise and financial assistance to Colorado's farmers, ranchers, forest land-owners, and other land stewards. NRCS employees help people help the land.

## Ask NRCS About...

- pollinator plantings,
- mulching,
- low tunnels,
- high tunnels,
- raised beds,
- cover crops,
- irrigation water management (IWM),
- conservation crop rotation,
- conservation tillage,
- soil testing,
- composting facility,
- integrated pest management (IPM),
- wildlife habitat plantings,
- tree/ shrub plantings, and hedgerows,
- structures for wildlife bee boards,
- nest boxes,

- perch poles,
- soil health assessments,
- pasture assessments,
- nutrient management,
- residue management,
- micro-irrigation, and more.



## How Can NRCS Help?

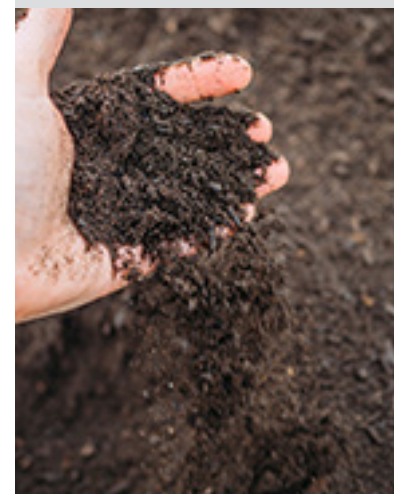
### Technical Assistance (TA)

Some landowners and natural resource stakeholders partner with NRCS, seeking only the Agency's free technical expertise and assistance.

NRCS conservation technical assistance (CTA) can provide land users assistance and opportunities to address concerns and problems related to the use of natural resources. It provides assistance to conduct resource assessments, develop practice designs, establish resource monitoring, or follow up on installed practices.

One of the most popular tools the Agency provides through CTA is the development of a conservation plan.

*"Many small farm producers know NRCS because of the success we've had in helping them or someone they know install high tunnels," said Casey Harrison, resource conservationist for the NRCS in Colorado. "High tunnels are just the tip of the iceberg. There are tons of opportunities for NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance for conservation measures; all designed for producers to improve or maintain natural resource conditions on their ag operation."*



## NRCS Financial Assistance (FA)

NRCS provides financial assistance for selected conservation activities. NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Through these programs, the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.

## NRCS FA Programs

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (EQIP)** offers farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners financial, cost-share assistance to implement structural and management conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural lands, large and small.

### MORE ABOUT EQIP

- ♦ Large and small ag producers are

encouraged to submit an EQIP application.

- ♦ NRCS will work with you to conduct an evaluation of the current condition of the natural resource conditions or concerns on your land and draft a conservation plan with conservation practices and activities that will help mitigate the concerns and improve the conditions.
- ♦ NRCS will offer you an EQIP contract to receive financial assistance for the cost of implementing recommended practices.

The **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** helps producers take steps to improve the condition of the land using new conservation practices or activities that build upon existing natural resource conservation efforts.

### MORE ABOUT CSP

- ♦ No minimum acreage/production requirement needed to apply.
- ♦ The minimum annual payment for participating in CSP is \$4,000.
- ♦ Small urban ag producers can now enroll in CSP and if enrolled are guaranteed a minimum \$20,000 five-year contract.

**CONSERVATION PLANNING** is a smart approach when trying to make positive impacts on ag., operation's bottom lines, natural resources, and long-term sustainability and can even help comply with environmental regulations.

### **NRCS Conservation Plans...**

- ♦ are free,
- ♦ can help identify immediate and potential problems that may result in the degrading of resources and the decrease in productivity on certain lands,
- ♦ provide an assessment and inventory of resources, recommendations for conservation practices and strategies to help make decision to reach natural resource and conservation goals.
- ♦ can include a practical implementation schedule for applying needed conservation measures and practices,
- ♦ are an important starting point in moving towards NRCS financial assistance,
- ♦ are not one-size fit all. The NRCS technical experts know that every property is unique, and every farmer, rancher, and forestland owner have different goals and objectives. Plans are developed with landowners, for landowners and their specific needs.



"I think it's really important to have programs that offer support to landowners of all different sizes.. we've been working alongside NRCS for years now.. we work with them on things like cover crops, getting irrigation setup and reimbursement for the funding for our first high tunnel... cover crops are a huge thing for us because we really focus on building soil quality... finding that partnership with the NRCS really allowed us to expand that part of our operation. Working with the NRCS just gives us more of an incentive to do so."

Paul Fleischer  
Farmer/Owner Operator

