



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option

NASHVILLE, January 15, 2020 – The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reminds historically underserved producers, who are participating in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), of the advance payment option. This option allows them to get conservation practice payments in advance of practice implementation.

“Some farmers don’t have the financial ability to wait for the NRCS reimbursement to arrive,” said Sheldon Hightower, Tennessee NRCS State Conservationist. *“The advance payment option makes NRCS conservation assistance more accessible to underserved producers and enables them to participate without having to worry about covering up-front costs themselves or looking for a loan to cover the costs.”*

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and to deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

In fiscal 2019, NRCS invested \$1.3 billion through EQIP to implement conservation practices on more than 13 million acres.

A [historically underserved producer](#) is described as one of the below:

- **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** – is new to farming or ranching, or, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years.
- **Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** – is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of that group without regard to their individual qualities.
- **Veteran Farmer or Rancher** – has served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm or ranch, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years, or first obtained veteran status during the last 10 years.
- **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher** – has a household income at or below the national poverty level. Eligibility can be determined by using [this online tool](#).

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Under the advance payment option, such producers may request payments when they have final designs and job sheets and are ready to begin their EQIP practices. Advance payments provide at least 50 percent of the payment rate for each practice. The funds must be spent within 90 days of receipt and practices must be completed as agreed to in an EQIP plan of operations. Producers also may opt to have NRCS pay the contractors or vendors directly.

EQIP practices include vegetative practices, structural practices, management practices, and other improvements that further program goals such as conservation activity plans.

More Information

For more information, visit the [advance payments website](#) where you can download the [EQIP Advance Payment Fact Sheet](#) and read the blog [#FridaysOnTheFarm: Advance Payment Helps Extend the Season blog](#). For more information on NRCS Farm Bill programs, visit nrcs.usda.gov/farbill or contact your [local NRCS field office](#).

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