High Tunnel System

FAQ

What is a high tunnel system?
High tunnels are unheated, plastic-covered structures that provide an intermediate level of environmental protection and control compared to open field conditions and heated greenhouses. They are easy to build and maintain. They provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season, reduce or avoid use of pesticides and reduce runoff and leaching of nitrogen into the soil.

High tunnels are usually covered with a single layer of 6 ml plastic and are passively ventilated using roll-up side and end walls, which can be opened or removed.

What is a “manufactured” high tunnel?
The high tunnel structure must be planned, designed and constructed from a manufactured kit in accordance with manufacturers’ recommendations. The high tunnel frame must be constructed of metal, wood or durable plastic and be at least 6 feet in height at the peak of the structure. If required for enclosure, end wall covering may be greenhouse-grade plastic, polycarbonate, wood or other material.

Is there a size limit for the high tunnel system?
No. There is no size limit to the high tunnel system.

Interested in extending your growing season?
At USDA, we believe it’s important for all communities to have access to fresh, locally-grown foods—especially in places where farm-fresh produce isn’t readily available or accessible. That’s why the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial assistance to help farmers, Indian Tribes and community organizations expand their local crop production by installing a high tunnel system. To find out if a high tunnel system is right for you, and to apply, contact your local USDA Service Center.

NEVADA
Natural Resources Conservation Service Offices:
Caliente Service Center: (775) 726-3101
Elko Service Center: (775) 738-8431
Ely Service Center: (775) 289-4065
Fallon Service Center: (775) 423-5124
Las Vegas Service Center: (702) 407-1400
Lovelock Service Center: (775) 273-2134
Minden Service Center: (775) 782-3661
Winnemucca Service Ctr: (775) 623-5025
Yerington Service Center: (775) 463-2265
Are there any limitations on how much financial assistance I can receive for a high tunnel system?

NRCS has set a practice payment cap of $50,000 for high tunnels. An applicant can apply for one or multiple high tunnels, as long as the total cost does not exceed the established practice payment cap for that year.

If I already have a high tunnel, can I apply for another one?

Yes. An applicant can apply for a high tunnel system, even if the grower already has an existing NRCS-funded high tunnel or those installed on their own.

Can I construct my own high tunnel?

No, high tunnel systems must be obtained from a commercial source in order to receive NRCS funding. There are commercial sources available across the nation that provide high tunnel kits.

Can I leave the high tunnel system up all year?

Management of the high tunnel system will depend on climatic conditions. Under extreme snow loads, wind condition or intense duration of sunlight, the plastic cover of the high tunnel system can be removed or replaced by shade cloth. Consult manufacturer’s specifications and climate condition management in your area.

Are there limitations on where I can install the high tunnel?

The high tunnel system can be placed on land capable of producing crops and where crops are grown in the natural soil profile. Raised beds may be installed but cannot be higher than 12 inches in depth.

Are there limitations to what can be produced in high tunnels?

Yes. Production that is not allowed includes: crops grown on benches or in pots, livestock or poultry and crops that are federally restricted, such as marijuana. High tunnels can be used for crops that are grown in the natural soil profile or in raised beds.

Can I install electricity to power heating or cooling units in the high tunnel system?

Under the high tunnel system funding, financial assistance is provided only for the structure itself. Electricity, venting systems, lighting, etc. can be installed providing the additions meet manufacturer’s designs and specifications. However, the grower is responsible for those costs.

Eligibility

The high tunnel system is open to individuals, businesses, non-profits, Indian Tribes, legal entities or joint operations that are either currently engaged in crop production OR who have a demonstrated interest in crop production. Examples of eligible groups include: individual farmers, farmer entities or grower groups which may consist of community garden organizations, non-profits, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations and more.

Participants new to USDA will need to register with the USDA Farm Service Agency before applying for a high tunnel system through NRCS.

The grower or grower group must already be engaged in production (for example, an established community garden or an established farm) or has demonstrated an interest in production.

High tunnel systems are offered through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA). There are a few other basic eligibility requirements that apply to EQIP and AMA. Learn more by visiting your local USDA Service Center or www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov.