



United States Department of Agriculture

On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials

Applicant Webinar

May 13, 2021



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On-Farm Trials Overview



- **Authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill**
- **A component of Conservation Innovation Grants, which is itself a part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
- **Includes the Soil Health Demo Trial priority**



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On-Farm Trials vs. CIG Classic



CIG Classic

Projects support the ***development*** of new approaches and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands

On-Farm Trials

Projects support widespread ***adoption*** and evaluation of innovative approaches, and awardees must offer incentive payments to participating producers



2020 Competition and Awards



Priority	# Applied	# Awarded	\$ Awarded
Precision Agriculture	6	2	4.8M
Soil Health Demonstration Trials	51	6	11M
Mgmt. Technologies & Strategies	29	4	6.5M
Irrigation Mgmt. Technologies	11	2	2M
Totals:	97	14	24.3M



Application Essentials

NFO posted on Grants.gov

Opportunity number USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-21-NOFO0001094

Applications submitted through the Programs Portal

eAuthentication (eAuth) level-2 credentials required



New!

Proposals due June 21, 2021



On-Farm Trials Funding

- **Up to \$25 million available**
- **\$5 million maximum award size**
- **\$250,000 minimum award size**
- **Projects 3-5 years in duration**



On-Farm Trials – 2020 Priorities

- **Irrigation Management**
- **Climate Smart Agricultural Solutions**
- **Management Technologies and Strategies**
- **Soil Health Demonstration Trials**



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Soil Health Demo Trial



- **NRCS intends to spend at least \$10 million of total On-Farm Trials Funding on applications under the Soil Health Demo Trial priority.**
- **Supports more widespread adoption of soil health management systems and practices.**
- **Awardees required to use consistent evaluation protocols and methods for assessing soil carbon changes and other soil health outcomes (including economics).**
- **Awardees consent to NRCS using data for Congressionally-mandated report.**



On-Farm Trials—How It Works

- 1. Incentive payments to producers to implement innovation**
- 2. Technical assistance to help producers with implementation**
- 3. Evaluation funding to entities to robustly assess natural resource and economic (and to the extent possible, social) outcomes**



Events in a typical project

- **OFT proposal submitted-due June 21**
- **NRCS award announcements— October 2021**
- **Agreements finalized— January 2022**
- **Partner consults with NRCS technical contact**
- **Partner identifies participating producers for on-farm trials**



Events in a typical project

- Partner coordinates with NRCS to affirm producer eligibility
- Partner makes incentive payments to participating producers
- Partner provides technical assistance to participating producers
- Over time, partner evaluates conservation (economics and social optional) benefits of trials
- Partner submits semi-annual progress reports, annual financial reports, and ultimately a final project report



Eligible Entities

- **Private entities whose primary business is related to agriculture**
- **NGOs with experience working with agricultural producers**
- **Non-Federal government agencies (including Universities)**



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Producer Eligibility



- **EQIP-eligible**

*incentive payments do not count toward a producer's EQIP payment limitation.

- **Must be in compliance with Highly Erodible Lands/Wetlands Conservation provisions**

- **Adjusted Gross Income**

*waivers may be requested



NRCS Responsibilities



- **NEPA activities**
- **Highly Erodible Lands/Wetlands Conservation, AGI and EQIP eligibility checks**
- **Technical oversight**
- **Technical assistance at partner request**



Matching Funds



- **A minimum of 25% of the federal share of the agreement is required in partner match**
- **Magnitude and significance of value-added match (cash and in-kind support) are considered in project evaluation criteria**
- **Examples of value-added match—producer outreach and education, communications activities, environmental monitoring**



Additional Key Points



- **Priority consideration given to projects that meaningfully involve historically underserved producers.**
- **No On-Farm Trials funding can be used to pay for partner indirect costs.**
- **Direct administrative expenses (e.g., filling out required reports, organizing partner meetings) are allowable costs.**



On-Farm Trials



Questions and Answers

NRCSCIG@USDA.GOV



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