On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials

Applicant Webinar

May 13, 2021
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th># Applied</th>
<th># Awarded</th>
<th>$ Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Precision Agriculture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soil Health Demonstration Trials</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mgmt. Technologies &amp; Strategies</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.5M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irrigation Mgmt. Technologies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2M</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.3M</strong></td>
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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

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
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)
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

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