



Conservation Programs & Practices for: Energy Conservation

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with agricultural and forest producers to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the current Farm Bill (Agricultural Act of 2014), and offers financial and technical assistance to landowners to address high priority resource concerns through the implementation of conservation practices. Contact your local NRCS field office for assistance.

The 2014 Farm Bill

The 2014 Farm Bill, enacted on February 7, 2014, offers voluntary conservation programs that benefit both agricultural and forest producers and the environment.

The conservation provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decades and previous farm bills.

Contact NRCS:

Massachusetts USDA Service Centers

- Greenfield: 413-772-0384 ext.3
- Hadley: 413-585-1000 ext. 3
- Holden: 508-829-4477 ext. 3
- Pittsfield: 413-443-1776 ext. 3
- Westford: 978-692-1904 ext. 3
- West Wareham: 508-295-5151 ext. 2
- West Yarmouth: 508-771-6476

NRCS's national On-Farm Energy Initiative provides funding and technical help for installing cost-effective energy conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

These conservation practices reduce on-farm emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that reduce air quality.

Ground-level ozone has been named by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a harmful pollutant present throughout Massachusetts. Bay State farmers can help reduce emissions that create this harmful pollutant by installing the conservation practices below.

Conservation practices eligible for financial assistance

EQIP offers financial help for the following practices that reduce pollution and greenhouse emissions. An energy audit that meets NRCS standards is required.



Greenhouse Heat Management: Energy/shade screens, root zone heating, horizontal air flow and ventilation, or high efficiency heating systems with automated controls provide energy savings of 30 percent or more for greenhouses.



Maple Syrup Reverse Osmosis, Steam-enhanced Pans, and Evaporators: Farmstead energy improvements to reduce evaporation time includes new or replaced reverse osmosis system, new membrane, steam-enhanced pans, and replacement of inefficient evaporators for energy savings of up to 75 percent.



Animal Waste Methane Digesters: An anaerobic digester biologically treats agricultural waste to produce biogas (methane) used for energy production. The process also reduces odors, greenhouse gas emissions and pathogens.



NRCS Conservation Programs & Practices for Energy Conservation

Why do we offer help with energy conservation?

Air quality is inherently related to energy because most energy production methods create emissions that negatively impact our air quality.

Poor air quality has a negative impact on our health, our environment and contributes directly to climate change.

Emissions from agriculture and energy include particulate matter, methane, and carbon dioxide.

When two other common agricultural emissions - nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds - are combined, they create another harmful pollutant called ground-level ozone. Ground-level ozone is of particular concern in Massachusetts.

The major sources of harmful agricultural emissions are motor vehicles, electricity, fuel burning, methane, pesticides, propellants, fuels and solvents.

Some natural processes that breakdown manure and fertilizers also produce nitrogen oxides.

What can farmers do?

Farmers in Massachusetts can take the following steps to reduce emissions and save money:

1. Reduce your energy use.

Request an energy audit, which will identify where energy is wasted and recommend ways to use energy efficiently.

2. Install renewable energy technology.

There are many types of renewable energy; research what type of technology is right for you.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Who can apply?

- Owners of land in agricultural or forest production, or persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural or forest production, on eligible land that has a natural resource concern.
- There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP, however, projects that address more significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding.

How do I apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria is available on our website.
- An Agricultural Energy Management Plan or energy audit is required.
 - The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP) provides energy audits and helps to coordinate financial assistance. MFEP is a joint project of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and The Center for EcoTechnology (CET).
 - Contact MFEP: 413-727-3090 or visit www.massfarmenergy.com
- To apply, you will need to file the following forms (also on our website):
 - Conservation Program Application (CCC-1200)
 - Adjusted Gross Income Certification (CCC-926)
 - Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026)
- A DUNS number, and registration and yearly renewal in the System for Award Management (SAM) will be required before contracts can be obligated and for payment eligibility determination.
- If your application is funded, you will be required to install and maintain your conservation practices according to NRCS standards.

Conservation Plans & Conservation Activity Plans

Your program application must be supported by an NRCS approved conservation plan, which provides documentation of the practices that could be used to address your natural resource concerns. We will work with you to develop an approved conservation plan.

You may also apply for financial assistance to hire Technical Service Providers (TSP) to develop a specialty plans called Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) to address certain land use activities or specific resource needs on your land.

Call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information.