

EQIP & CSP for Historically Underserved Producers

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) continues to address the unique circumstances and concerns of Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged, and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, as well as Veteran Farmers. The Farm Bill continues to provide for voluntary participation, offers assistance, and focuses on equity in accessing U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and services for cropland, pastureland, and forest land.

For the financial assistance programs of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), historically underserved participants are eligible for different provisions as follows:

- For EQIP, the historically underserved participant is eligible to be paid a higher payment rate for installing conservation practices and to receive an advance payment for the purpose of purchasing materials or services to implement a conservation practice. Also, funds will be targeted to historically underserved groups with special funding pools.
- For CSP, historically underserved groups of Beginning Farmer and Socially Disadvantaged Farmer have special funding pools. Also, historically underserved participants will receive a minimum payment of \$1,000.

Each historically underserved producer group is defined below to help individuals determine if they meet the criteria for any of the following categories.

Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers Definition:

- A participant with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years, AND
- A participant with a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of 4 or less than 50% of the county medium household income in each of the previous 2 years.

Note: A legal entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher if all individual members independently qualify.

A “Self-Determination Tool” for Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher is available to the public and may be completed on-line or printed and completed hardcopy at: www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/. The tool is located under the title “Determination Tools” and is easy to use. It requires only 4 entries relative to the location and income of the participant. The entries include: State, County, Gross Farm Sales, and Adjusted Gross Income for the last two years listed. The results will indicate if you are eligible or not eligible to qualify as a Limited Resource Farmer.

Beginning Farmers or Ranchers Definition:

- A participant who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of a legal entity, AND
- A participant who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation is defined for an individual or entity as follows:
 - a. In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.
 - b. In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary





for day-to-day activities, such that if the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers Definition:

- A socially disadvantaged participant is an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50% ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.
- A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group, without regard to their individual qualities. Identified socially disadvantaged groups include:
 - a. American Indians or Alaskan Natives
 - b. Asians
 - c. Blacks or African Americans
 - d. Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
 - e. Hispanics

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher Definition:

- A veteran is a person who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable, AND
- A participant who also meets the definition of a Beginning Farmer or Rancher which is a participant who has not operated a farm or ranch; or has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years.
- For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a veteran farmer or rancher entity, all members must meet the definition of a Veteran Farmer or Rancher.

Verification of Participant Self-Certification

All participants that certify eligibility as a Limited Resource Farmer, Beginning Farmer, or Veteran Farmer will provide all records necessary to justify their claim as requested by a NRCS representative. It is the responsibility of the participant to provide accurate data to support all items addressed in this application at the request of NRCS.



Additional Information

If you need more information about EQIP and CSP, contact the NRCS District Conservationist at your local USDA Service Center. Information on financial assistance programs is available on the Illinois NRCS website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/il/programs/financial/.

