



Frequently Asked Questions about the NRCS High Tunnel System

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - Michigan

Who is eligible for financial assistance for installing a high tunnel system?

Participants must be engaged in agriculture and own or have control of agricultural land. American Indian tribes are also eligible for assistance. Applicants must register their farm with USDA and meet USDA Farm Bill eligibility requirements. The applicants must also prove control of the land over the life of the program contract. Additional eligibility information is available from local NRCS field offices.

How much financial assistance can I receive for installing a high tunnel system?

The maximum financial assistance level for 2019 is \$6,970, based on the size of the high tunnel planned. Historically underserved producers can receive a maximum of \$8,364.

What size of high tunnel can I build?

Participants can build whatever size of high tunnel that meets their needs. Financial assistance is based on the size of the tunnel with a maximum funding amount based on size.

Do I have to take down my high tunnel at the end of the growing season or remove the cover?

No, participants are not required to remove the plastic cover or take down the high tunnel at the end of the growing season. However, it is the participant's responsibility to maintain the high tunnel for at least four years. Where snow loads may damage the structure, the tunnel cover should be removed or rolled up at the end of the growing season unless the structure is designed by the manufacturer to withstand expected snow loads.

What kind of structure can I install?

High tunnel systems are intended to be enclosed structures to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner. They must be constructed from pre-manufactured kits with plastic sheeting over the exterior. The tunnels must have a minimum interior height of 6 feet. Crops must be grown in the natural soil.

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Where can I build the high tunnel?

High tunnels must be placed on land that is already in agricultural production. It is the producer's responsibility to comply with local zoning ordinances and regulations. A soil test is recommended to determine if heavy metals or other contaminants are present. There are many factors to consider when determining the site and orientation of the high tunnel including adequate drainage, exposure to high winds, adequate sunlight, availability of water for irrigation, and more.

Can I install a heating or ventilation system in my high tunnel system?

Yes, producers may install heaters or ventilation systems if done according to the manufacturer's recommendations. NRCS will not provide financial assistance for these improvements. Producers who contracted for the high tunnel system practice in prior years are also permitted to add these features.

Can I receive financial assistance for installing irrigation equipment inside of the high tunnel?

Participants may be eligible for financial assistance if the land where the high tunnel is located was already irrigated over 2 of the last 5 previous growing seasons.

What other conservation practices associated with high tunnels can I apply for?

Other practices compatible with high tunnel production can include pest management, cover crops, irrigation water management and others. These practices are only available if they are not already being applied on land where the high tunnel will be located. NRCS or conservation district staff can help producers determine what practices are most beneficial.

Useful Links:

NRCS-Michigan Environmental Quality Incentives Program Web page @ www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mi/programs/financial/eqip/

List of NRCS-Michigan Field Offices @ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/mi/contact/local/>

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