

GROWING ORGANIC WITH EQIP

EQIP ASSISTANCE FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) highlights the availability of financial and technical assistance to help producers of all commodities meet their conservation goals. It specifically includes help to organic producers through the 2009 Organic Initiative.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), this nationwide special initiative provides financial assistance to National Organic Program (NOP) certified producers as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production. All applicants must have an organic system plan that meets NOP guidelines. (More information on those guidelines can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/)

Organic producers applying through this initiative can receive up to \$20,000/year or \$80,000 over six years. USDA is offering more than \$1.4 million to Iowa organic producers through the Initiative. Farmers may also compete for the larger pool of EQIP funds that allow for up to \$300,000 over six years.

Signup for EQIP is continuous. However the application funding cutoff date for this Organic Initiative is **May 29**.

ORGANIC INITIATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- Financial assistance is provided for only those practices which will assist growers meet provisions of an Organic System Plan (OSP) as administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
- Payments are not authorized for activities or practices which are solely production related and are not linked to an identified resource concern.
- Participants who are already certified organic must implement EQIP practices according to an approved OSP and submit a copy of their current OSP.
- Participants that are transitioning to organic production must submit a self-certification letter saying they agree to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan.

CORE Six* Organic Initiative Conservation Practices

- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crop
- Nutrient Management
- Pest Management
- Prescribed Grazing
- Forage Harvest Management

Iowa Organic Initiative Conservation Practices

- Animal Mortality Facility
- Composting Facility
- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/ Direct Seed
- Contour Farming
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge-Till
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Fence
- Field Border
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Pipeline
- Heavy Use Protection Area
- Stripcropping
- Watering Facility
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation

** Core Six practices receive increased payment rate due to increased costs related to organic production.*

APPLY BY MAY 29.



CONSERVATION PLANNING

For more than 70 years, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers with conservation plans to meet their environmental and economic goals, while concurrently planning for the protection of the soil, water, air and wildlife resources. Conservation goals are highly individual and may certainly include transitioning to organic agriculture (or boosting pollinator populations, increasing biodiversity including soil-borne organisms, enhancing water quality, controlling invasive species or dozens of other resource-enhancing possibilities).

NRCS conservationists work with farmers to come up with scientifically-sound alternatives for accomplishing their goals and working out a timeline to implement the conservation practices in the plan.

All information provided to NRCS for conservation planning purposes is confidential. Implementation may be partially funded through Farm Bill programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

WHAT IS AN OSP?

An OSP is a management plan for organic production or for an organic handling operation that has been agreed to by the producer/handler and the certifying agent. It includes all written plans that govern all aspects of ag production or handling. An OSP must be developed annually and include:

1. Practices and procedures to be performed and maintained;
2. A list of each substance to be used in production or handling;
3. Monitoring practices and procedures to be performed and maintained;
4. A description of the record keeping system;
5. Practices and physical barriers established to prevent co-mingling with conventional food and contact with prohibited substances, and;
6. Additional information deemed necessary by the certifying agent (CA) to document NOP compliance.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about 2008 Farm Bill activities, visit the national NRCS Web site:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2008

For detailed Iowa conservation practice information, call Iowa NRCS at (515) 284-6655, or go online:

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ia_standards.html



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land