

Changes to the 2012 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Outline of Changes



Grammatical & Formatting
Changes



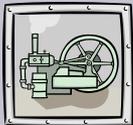
Agricultural Producer Definition



Organic Producer Requirements



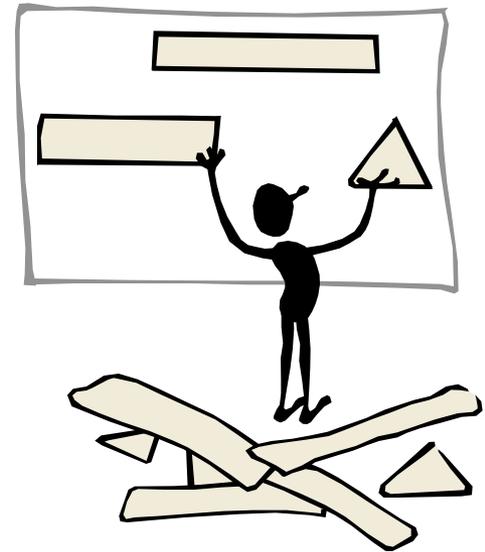
Aquaculture



Energy

Grammatical & Formatting Changes

- **General Format Changed to Make More User Friendly**
- **Expanded Guidance on Information & Outreach**
 - **Coincide with Program Language**
 - **Consolidate References in One Location**



Agricultural Producer Definition

- **Previous Policy:**
 - Required that an annual minimum of \$1,000 of agricultural products be produced or sold to qualify as an “Agriculture Producer”



Agricultural Producer Definition

- **2012 Policy: An Agriculture Producer is**
 - A person, legal entity, Indian Tribe, or joint operation with signature authority and...
 - Engaged in or have an interest in agricultural production or forestry management.
 - Interest in means one of the following:
 - Owner or Renter
 - An Interest in Products Produced by Operation
 - A Member of a Joint Operation with Interest

Agricultural Producer Definition

- 2012 Policy: Engaged or Having an Interest may be Documented by:

- Records from the Farm Service Agency that identify the applicant as owner or operator

- Example: *FSA 156-EZ Abbreviated Farm Record Report*

Or..

- The production of \$1,000 in Ag. Products (produced and/or sold)

- Example: *Estimated production and Statistical Values*

- *IRS Form 1040 Schedule F*

- *Other Accounting Records Certified by a Tax Preparer*

Or..

- Other Documentation Supplemented by State Policy

- *Must be approved by the State Conservationist*

Organic Production Requirements

- **Previous Policy:**
 - Participant must agree to develop & implement practices consistent with an Organic System Plan (OSP)
 - This was documented by participant in writing and kept in the contract file
 - Organic certified operations must:
 - Maintain certification
 - Provide copy of the OSP



Organic Production Requirements

- **2012 Policy:**
 - **EQIP Organic Initiative Includes:**
 - Certified Organic
 - Transitioning to Organic
 - Exempt Operations
 - **An OSP is Required for All participants, including Transitioning**



Organic Production Requirements

- **2012 Policy: Certified Organic -**
 - **Implement practices consistent with USDA certified Organic System Plan (OSP)**
 - Copy of OSP must be provided prior to contract approval
 - National Organic Program (NOP) requirements must be addressed during contract development to assure practice consistency with OSP standards
 - **Organic Certification must be maintained for the life of the contract.**
 - NRCS will check certification annually via the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service Web Based List of Certified Operations
 - If certification is not maintained, the contract may be subject to termination

Organic Production Requirements

- **2012 Policy: Transitioning to Organic -**
 - **Must self-certify that they agree to develop & implement an OSP**
 - National Organic Program (NOP) requirements must be addressed during contract development to assure practice consistency with OSP standards
 - Must provide NRCS with contact of their USDA accredited Organic Certifying Agent prior to contract approval
 - **NRCS will annual review implemented practices are consistent with an OSP**
 - If not, the contract may be subject to termination
 - **NRCS is Not Authorized to enforce the provisions of the NOP.**
 - Organic certification at contract completion is not required

Organic Production Requirements

- **2012 Policy: Exempt Operations -**
 - Organic producers selling less than \$5,000 per year are exempt from Organic Certification
 - Exempt Operations are eligible to participate in EQIP
 - Ranked as certified producers
 - Must self-certify agreement to develop & implement and OSP
 - Must meet other Organic Initiative requirements
 - National Organic Program (NOP) requirements must be addressed during contract development to assure practice consistency with OSP standards
 - NRCS will annual review implemented practices are consistent with an OSP. If not, the contract may be subject to termination
 - NRCS is Not Authorized to enforce the provisions of the NOP.
 - Organic certification at contract completion is not required

Aquaculture

- **Previous Policy:**
 - Did not clearly define how NRCS should handle Aquaculture Production with respect to providing EQIP financial assistance



Aquaculture

- **2012 Policy: Land Eligibility**
 - **Must be:**
 - Agriculture Land
 - Nonindustrial Private Forest Land
 - Or Other land on which agricultural products, livestock, or forest products are produced
 - **Permanently Submerged Lands May Be Eligible if All of the Following Apply:**
 - The EQIP practice(s) to be implemented is land based
 - The Farm Service Agency completes farm records, Common Land Unit (CLU) information, & Highly Erodible Land (HEL)/Wetland Compliance Determinations
 - EQIP practice(s) addresses an identified resource concern

Aquaculture

- **2012 Policy: Conservation Practices & Planning**
 - **Ineligible Practices** are those that do not address a resource concern directly tied to eligible land.
 - **Example:** A practice implemented entirely within a water area and which does not address a resource concern related to the submerged land.



Energy



- **Previous Policy:**
 - Did not clearly define how NRCS should address the New Energy Resource Concern with respect to providing EQIP financial assistance



Energy

- 2012 Policy:
 - Ineligible Practices
 - Practices or activities where the primary purpose is renewable energy production
 - Eligible Costs
 - Renewable energy production that is related to a conservation benefit (excluding energy conservation).
 - *Example: Converting biogas to address air quality*
 - Ineligible Costs
 - Renewable Energy production that is:
 - *Not related to a conservation benefit*
 - *For extents grate than what is required to address the resource concern*
 - *Renewable power sources when other sources of electricity are available*

Questions?

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EQIP vs. WHIP



The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is program for private landowners to develop and improve high quality habitat that supports wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance through cost-share agreements to implement habitat restoration and enhancement projects.