



Virginia Overview

Organic farming positively impacts our environment and is one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture. Native pollinators, beneficial insects that attack plant pests, and wildlife also benefit from organic systems.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Virginia offers financial and technical assistance for certified organic farmers and those interested in transitioning to organic production to address their soil, water, and plant health resource concerns.

Organic Initiative ranking criteria have been established based on resource concerns that link to National Organic Program (NOP) objectives.

Agricultural Act of 2014

Organic Initiative

Environmental Quality Incentives Program



NRCS offers special funding to help transitioning and certified organic growers install conservation practices that improve soil health and water quality.

The Organic Initiative is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS in Virginia is offering more than 40 conservation practices to protect water quality and improve soil health.

Practices receiving special emphasis this year include:

- Establishing Perennials in Your Rotation
- Increasing the Use of Cover Crops
- Implementing No-Till and Reduced Till Methods
- Installing Field Borders and Wildflower Planting
- Establishing Trees and Shrubs



Eligibility

Farmer applications will be ranked in two separate categories or pools: transitioning farmers and certified organic farmers. (Organic producers may also apply for assistance under general EQIP.)

How to apply

Program sign-up is continuous with periodic evaluation and preapprovals throughout the year.

You will need to file several eligibility forms at the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs. These offices are usually co-located with NRCS.

Certified organic farmers must submit a copy of their current organic system plan (OSP) and maintain their organic certification for their entire EQIP contract.

Transitioning organic farmers need to:

- begin or be in the process of transitioning to a certified organic operation.
- submit a self-certification letter stating they agree to develop and implement an organic system plan (template available online).
- be working with an organic certifying agency.

You will also need lease agreements or proof you control the land you wish to enroll. If you are already USDA Certified Organic, bring copies of your certification and Organic System Plan to the local NRCS Office.

Sample practices for improving soil condition:



- Conservation Crop Rotation – Add Perennials to the Rotation
- Residue & Tillage Management – Use No-Till or Reduced Till
- Cover Crop – Use Legume or High Biomass Cover Crops

Sample water quality/soil erosion prevention practices:



- Contour Farming – Farming on the Contour
- Residue & Tillage Management – Use Reduced Till Methods

NRCS will help eligible producers develop a conservation plan, which will become the basis of the EQIP contract.

EQIP applications will be ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

More Information

Information and application forms to begin the program application process are available at your local NRCS office.

Call or visit your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals.

Find your local USDA Service Center

To find your local office, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/va/contact/.

Helpful Resources

- USDA National Organic Program www.ams.usda.gov
- National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service www.attra.ncat.org
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/organic.shtml

www.va.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service