



March 2016

# Factsheet

## FARM BILL 2014: EQIP ORGANIC INITIATIVE

The 2014 Farm Bill provides financial and technical assistance to help producers transitioning to organic farming and certified organic producers meet their conservation goals. The **EQIP Organic Initiative** provides financial assistance to organic producers to help them implement a broad set of conservation practices to address resource concerns including:

- Developing a conservation plan
- Establishing buffer zones
- Planning and installing pollinator habitat
- Improving soil quality and organic matter while minimizing erosion
- Developing a grazing plan and supportive livestock practices
- Improving irrigation efficiency
- Enhancing cropping rotations and nutrient management



This assistance helps producers plan and implement conservation practices to support the environmental sustainability of their organic operations. Highlights of the organic provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill and requirements for participation in the program include:

- Financial and technical assistance to plan and implement conservation practices to address resource concerns associated with organic operations.
- Financial assistance limited to a maximum of \$20,000 per fiscal year AND not to exceed \$80,000 over a rolling six-year Farm Bill for ALL contracts approved through the authority.
- Participants who are not Organic-certified or are exempt from Organic certification agree to develop and work towards implementing an Organic

System Plan (OSP) to meet NOP organic certification through USDA.

- Producers must meet all the other USDA and EQIP eligibility requirements and must register their farms with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

**EQIP Organic applicants** must demonstrate control of **eligible land in agricultural production**. Eligible

**land includes** cropland, rangeland, pastureland, and other farm or ranch lands.

Producers must also be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

Producers should use the following categories to identify their current or future production system:

- **Certified Organic:** Certified organic producers shall provide NRCS with a copy of their USDA NOP Organic Certificate or proof of good standing from a USDA accredited certifying agent and certification must be **maintained** for the life of the EQIP contract.

- **Exempt from Certification of the National Organic Program (NOP):** Producers who sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from NOP's certification. Exempt organic producers are eligible for the EQIP Organic Initiative provided that they self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an OSP.
- **Transitioning to Organic:** Producers who are transitioning to organic production shall self-certify that they agree to develop and work towards implementing an OSP.

For more information please visit [www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov).

**Helping People Help the Land**

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## Organic Farming System Principles

Title 190 –National Organic Farming Handbook, 190  
–612–H, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Nov. 2015.

### Protect the Health of the Soil and Natural

**Resources:** Adopt diverse crop rotations to balance nutrient demands on the soil, protect and enhance soil life, and control erosion by maintaining good tillage, planting cover crops, and adopting other conservation practices.

**Crop and nutrient management:** Producers replenish soil organic matter and nutrients by returning animal and green manures, crop residues, and other organic sources to the soil to maintain soil fertility and crop yields.

**Pest management:** Organic farmers simulate and utilize natural checks and balances to limit crop damage from pests. Producers establish beneficial habitat plantings to harbor predators of crop pests, build soil health to suppress soil-borne pathogens, diversify crop rotations to disrupt pest cycles, and plant cover crops to suppress weeds.

**Resource cycling:** Crop rotations that include cover crops and a mix of deep and shallow-rooted crops may enhance nutrient and water use and cycling within the soil profile.

**Biodiversity:** Fields that include hedge and tree rows of varied species provide wildlife habitat and structural biodiversity above and below ground. Wildlife corridors and wildlife-friendly fences maintain connectivity for wide-ranging wildlife such as deer and predators.

**Tillage and weed management:** In Organic systems, no-till and conservation tillage systems (such as the roller-crimper) and the use of flame weeders and mulches help reduce the intensity of soil disturbance in annual crop rotations.

A certifying agent list is available at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html>

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to:

- Producers who are certified organic or exempt from organic certification,
- Producers who are transitioning from conventional to organic agriculture.

Conservation assistance to help meet USDA National Organic Program (NOP) requirements include:

### Soil Health

- Erosion Control
- Organic Matter
- Nutrient Management
- Crop Rotation

### Biodiversity

- Buffers
- Habitat for wildlife, pollinators and beneficial insects

### Livestock Practices

- Pasture and Grazing Management Systems
- Diverse Pastures
- Fencing
- Walkways and Watering Facilities

### GET STARTED

Visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/contact/local/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/contact/local/) to find your local USDA Service Center and meet with an NRCS conservationist.

### Contact:

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### Links:

- NRCS Caribbean Area Organic Program: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd404422](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcseprd404422)
- NRCS Organic: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/organic](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/organic)
- USDA Organic: [www.usda.gov/organic](http://www.usda.gov/organic)
- USDA Extension Service Organic Production: [www.extension.org/organic\\_production](http://www.extension.org/organic_production)

### For More Information:

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