

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service
1835 Assembly Street, Room 950, Columbia, SC, 29201 (803) 253-3935
www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov

SC Conservation News--For Immediate Release

More Conservation Funding for Organic Ag Operations - Signup by May 20

SC NRCS offers more funding to organic producers for planning and implementing conservation practices

Contacts:

*Gordon Mikell, SC NRCS State Agronomist
gordon.mikell@sc.usda.gov, (803) 253-3893*

*Shaun Worley, SC NRCS Programs Specialist
shaun.worley@sc.usda.gov, (803) 253-3512*

COLUMBIA, April 12, 2011 – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Ann English announced another funding opportunity for certified organic producers and those transitioning to organic production to implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations.

While applications are accepted on a continuous basis, the cutoff date for this application period is set for **May 20, 2011**.

"Organic growers continue to express interest in program support to implement conservation practices," English said. "This additional opportunity will allow more producers to get assistance in protecting the natural resources on their land and creating conditions that help foster organic production."

Fiscal year 2011 marks the third year of USDA's Organic Initiative. Up to \$50 million is available this year to help producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production. For example, conservation practices might include planting cover crops, establishing integrated pest management plans, constructing seasonal high tunnels, or implementing nutrient management systems consistent with organic certification standards.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's [National Organic Program](#), those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000.

Organic Initiative funding is provided through NRCS' [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. The 2008 Farm Bill provided assistance specifically for organic farm operations and those converting to organic production.

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Under EQIP Organic Initiative contracts, NRCS provides financial payments and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation measures in keeping with organic production. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers may obtain additional assistance. The 2008 Farm Bill limits EQIP payments for organic operations to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

South Carolina producers interested in applying for EQIP Organic Initiative funding must submit applications through their local NRCS Service Center, which can be located through the Web site at http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/Watershed%20Teams/state_field_office_staff.html.

For more details about this initiative, visit www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/organic_support_SC.html.

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