

EQIP ORGANIC INITIATIVE 2011

EQIP INITIATIVE FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Overview

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Nevada has received funds to help organic farmers and those agricultural producers who are transitioning to organic farming. Applications are accepted on a continual basis, and are periodically ranked and approved for funding. Organic funds are available under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Financial Assistance

Eligible applicants can receive funding to implement conservation practices designed to improve natural resource conditions. These practices offer significant environmental benefits and help growers improve operational efficiency. Producers can receive about 75 to 90 percent of the cost of a high tunnel and related conservation practices such as drip irrigation, vegetative cover crops, and pest and nutrient management. Farmers who want to apply for financial assistance may receive up to \$20,000/year and are limited to \$80,000 over a six-year period.

High Tunnels (Hoop Houses)

Producers can also apply for a high tunnel under this Organic Initiative. Agricultural producers can apply for one or more high tunnels, up to 2,178 square feet, to be installed on cultivated land, including an existing garden, irrigated pasture or irrigated hayland. The High Tunnel Pilot Project is being offered in selected states to help NRCS test the conservation benefits of high tunnels for three years. Producers can receive about 75 to 90 percent of the cost of a high tunnel and related conservation practices. Other requirements and restrictions apply.

Conservation Planning Assistance

For more than 70 years, the NRCS has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers with conservation plans to meet their environmental and economic goals, while at the same time planning for the protection of soil, water, air and wildlife resources. Conservation goals are highly individual and may 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 will come to your farm and work with you to develop a conservation plan based on your farm goals. The plan will specify a time line to implement the conservation practices. Conservation planning assistance is free and does not require participation in financial programs. The NRCS conservationist may help you identify other funding opportunities and conservation programs for which you are eligible.

Participation and Confidentiality

Participation in Farm Bill programs is voluntary and all information provided to NRCS for conservation planning purposes is strictly confidential.

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How do I get started?

Visit your local USDA Service Center to:

1. register in the Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) database through the Farm Service Agency,
2. apply for assistance under the EQIP at the NRCS office, and
3. have or be willing to develop an Organic System Plan (OSP) on your land.

What do I bring with me?

If you are already certified, bring:

1. proof of farm ownership,
2. the name and contact information of the USDA accredited certifying agent who certified your organic operations, and
3. your organic system plan.

If you are transitioning, bring:

1. proof of farm ownership, and
2. the name of the USDA certifying agent you contacted to begin the organic certification process.

You will be asked to:

1. develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan (OSP).

What if I sell under \$5,000 a year and wish to acquire organic certification?

Producers who sell less than \$5,000 a year and wish to use EQIP to obtain organic certification are required to implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an OSP. The OSP is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Payments are not authorized for activities or practice components that are solely production related and are not linked to an identified resource concern. Payments may not be used for any costs related to organic certification.

Other programs available

EQIP contracts pay eligible producers 75 percent of the average cost of structural, vegetative, and management practices. Some producers may receive a larger percentage. Those who have farmed less than 10 years are considered beginning farmers and may be eligible for 90 percent cost share. Socially disadvantaged or those with limited financial resources (defined on a county-by-county basis) can receive 90 percent of the costs of conservation practices.

For more information

This fact sheet is an overview of the NRCS EQIP FY 2011 Organic Program. For complete details, contact your local NRCS Office; Albert Mulder, NRCS State Agronomist, (775) 857-8500 x 147; or Gary Roeder, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs at (775) 857-8500 x 103.

Web sites

NRCS program information can be found online at <http://www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov>; Agricultural Marketing Service at <http://www.ams.usda.gov>; and the Farm Service Agency at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>. Contact your local USDA Service Center to apply and complete details.

THANKS TO ALL FARMERS AND RANCHERS FOR ALL YOU DO!

AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS ARE ONE OF OUR NATION'S GREATEST ASSETS. NOT ONLY DO WE RELY ON AMERICAN AGRICULTURE FOR OUR FOOD, FEED, FIBER, AND FUEL, OUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS PRESERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND HELP DRIVE OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY.