

Organic Initiative

If you're certified organic, or looking to transition to organic agriculture, NRCS has technical and financial assistance to help you reach your goals for your farm or ranch.



Overview: The EQIP Organic Initiative provides technical and financial assistance to organic producers, or those transitioning to an organic production system, to plan and implement conservation practices to support the environmental sustainability of their operations. The initiative is funded by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Financial assistance is limited to a maximum of \$20,000 per fiscal year and no more than \$80,000 over six years.

Eligible Practices: The EQIP Organic Initiative offers a broad set of conservation practices to assist organic producers in addressing identified natural resource concerns on their operations. These include:

- Cover Crops;
- Crop rotations;
- Nutrient and pest management;
- Field borders;
- Planning and installing pollinator habitat;
- Fencing and watering facilities for implementing a planned grazing system, and;
- High Tunnel systems for crops.



Producer Requirements for EQIP Organic Initiative

Eligible agricultural producers include: those certified through USDA's National Organic Program (NOP), those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual sales are over \$1,000, but less than \$5,000. In addition, producers must meet all the other eligibility requirements associated with EQIP.

Eligibility for EQIP

To receive cost sharing through EQIP you:

- Must have an active interest in agricultural crop production at the time you apply for the program;
- Must have a minimum of \$1,000 in documented annual agricultural production;
- Must own or have control of the agricultural land for the length of the contract;
- Must comply with highly erodible and wetland provisions of the farm bill;
- Must meet the USDA defined Annual Gross Income (AGI) limits, and;
- Must establish eligibility as a producer within the USDA record system before applying.

To apply for EQIP funds, farmers must visit their local USDA Service Center to make an application. In order to receive

funds through the EQIP for any conservation practice, an application must be approved and a contract signed prior to any work being done.

Certified Organic Producers

To qualify for EQIP Organic Initiative assistance, applicants with certified organic operations must provide NRCS with a copy of their USDA National Organic Program Certificate or proof of good standing from a USDA accredited certifying agent. Certification must be maintained for the life of the EQIP contract.

Producers Transitioning to Organic

Producers who are applying for EQIP Organic Initiative assistance to transition to organic production will be required to self-certify that they agree to develop and work toward implementing an organic system plan. EQIP may not be used for any costs related to obtaining organic certification.

Producers Exempt from Certification

Exempt organic producers are eligible for the EQIP Organic Initiative provided that they self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an organic system plan.

CAP Supporting Organic

Another option for producers transitioning to organic is to develop a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) with financial assistance from NRCS. This plan

helps producers determine what is required for transitioning to an organic production system prior to developing an organic system plan. The plan must be developed by a Technical Service Provider who is certified in developing plans for organic transition. NRCS can help identify qualified Technical Service Provider.

Cost-share assistance for developing the plan ranges from \$2,272 - \$2,726. Certified organic producers are not eligible for this assistance.

More Information

For more information about EQIP and the Organic Initiative, visit your local NRCS field office located in the USDA Service Center, or the Nebraska NRCS web site at www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov, under the Programs tab.



www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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