

Fact Sheet - January 2012

EQIP

EQIP is a continuous sign-up program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that allows landowners or operators to apply for financial and technical assistance for approved conservation practices based on a current conservation plan. Contact the service center in the county in which you own land. Before applying, interested persons need to read the details of the EQIP Program.

Eligibility: Participant's Responsibility

1. In order to be eligible for EQIP, the applicant and the land must be determined eligible by NRCS.
2. If the applicant is an entity or joint operation, form CCC-901A Member's Information will be required.
3. You must be able to provide proof that you have control of the land for the proposed contract period.
4. A CCC-931 Average Adjusted Gross Income Form must be completed and submitted to FSA.
5. Sign and submit to FSA form AD-1026 – Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification.
6. In order to be considered an agricultural producer eligible for EQIP, the applicant must have a vested interest in production agricultural or non-industrial private forest land.
7. An applicant must provide correct name, address and social security number or tax identification number.
8. Beginning Farmer or Rancher: After the information is verified, a producer will be entered in the Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) in the county matching the deed.
9. Applicants must be determined eligible by NRCS prior to the start of ranking cut-off periods in order to be considered for funding. Ranking cut-off periods are announced throughout each fiscal year at the local, State, and National levels and vary from year to year.
10. If approved for funding, the participant must begin implementation of at least one approved conservation practice within the first 12 months of the contract, and continue practice implementation according to the contract schedule.

Application Process

1. Apply by completing form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application that is provided by your local field office.
2. Since sign-up is continuous, there may be more than one window of opportunity for funding your application based on available funding each fiscal year.
3. If a person applies after close of a ranking cut-off period, the application will automatically be deferred to the next cut-off period.
4. A certified conservation planner will develop a conservation plan and determine if the land offered for EQIP has an eligible resource concern that can be addressed through implementation of approved EQIP conservation practices.
5. NRCS ranks the application using criteria developed for the appropriate funding pool.
6. If approved, the applicant will work with NRCS to make an appointment finalizing the contract and schedule of operations prior to signing the contract for fund obligations. Both NRCS and the participant must sign the contract before it can be obligated.
7. The participant will now begin installing the conservation practices based on NRCS standards and specifications provided by the local field office or an approved technical service provider.
8. When the practices are completed, contact NRCS to make an appointment to certify the practices on the land.
9. After NRCS certifies the practices, the application for payment will be signed by the participant and NRCS then submitted electronically to the NRCS National Finance Center for payment.

More Information

Form SF-1199a, Direct Deposit must be filled out to receive electronic payment. Please visit the NRCS website at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs to read more about EQIP. You may contact your local USDA Service Center with links provided on the website to ask for more information.

Fact Sheet - February 2010

Introduction

On January 15, 2009, the Federal Register, Volume 74, No.10, announced the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) rules and guidelines. The program has been reauthorized through 2012. It expands program purposes to include forest management, organic farming and energy conservation benefits. Payments are limited to \$300,000 per person or legal entity, unless a project has special environmental significance. The program requires specific portions of funding to be made available for Socially Disadvantaged participants and Beginning Farmers or Ranchers. The program continues the designation that requires 60 percent of funding go to livestock related practices.

Resource Concerns

- Animal Waste Management
- Sheet and Rill Water Erosion Control
- Grazing Land Productivity
- Irrigation Water Use
- Air Quality
- Fertilizer Use
- Wildlife Habitat
- Energy
- Conservation Tillage to improve
- Carbon Sequestration

Organic Farming

Organic farmers will now be qualified for pest management, nutrient management, forage harvest management, conservation crop rotation cover crop, and prescribe grazing. Under Organic Farming rules, payments are limited to \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 during any six-year period. NRCS is authorized to cancel a contract if the participant is receiving payments related to organic practices but is not pursuing organic certification or is not in compliance with the Organic Production Act of 1990.

Applications and Application Ranking

Applications for EQIP will be accepted at any time during the year. However, funding cycles will vary based on budgetary allocations. Applications are ranked based on overall cost effectiveness, how effectively and comprehensively the project addresses the designated resource concerns and fulfills the purposes of EQIP, and how well it improves conservation.

Payment Limitations

The 2008 Act lowers the payment limitation for participants from \$450,000 to \$300,000 during any six-year period, except for projects having special environmental significance; in such cases the payments will be limited to \$450,000. For the purposes of applying the payment limitation and in accordance with the 2008 Act, the six-year period will include those payments made in fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Provides an increased payment rate to historically underserved producers that include beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The Act provides advance payments, of up to 30 percent of the anticipated costs to be incurred for the purpose of purchasing materials or services to implement a conservation practice, to historically underserved producers. It establishes a national target to set aside five percent of EQIP funds for socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers and an additional five percent of EQIP funds for beginning farmers or ranchers.

In the event a contract is cancelled on the part of the participant or terminated because of non-compliance, the NRCS state conservationist has the ability to retrieve all or a proportion of the payments.

(Continuation)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Irrigation Provisions

For applications that include water conservation or irrigation efficiency conservation practices, the 2008 Act amendment also requires NRCS to give priority to applications that demonstrate a reduction in water use by the agricultural operation. As a condition of receiving a higher ranking with the grouping of water conservation applications, the producer agrees not to use any associated water savings to bring new land under irrigation production, excluding incidental land needed for efficient operations.

Program Priorities

The following national priorities, consistent with the statutory resource concerns that include soil, water, wildlife, air quality, and related resource concerns, will be used in EQIP implementation:

- 1) Reductions of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds; the reduction of surface and groundwater contamination; and the reduction of emissions, such as concentrated animal feeding operations.
- 2) Conservation of ground and surface water resources.
- 3) Reduction of emissions such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- 4) Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land.
- 5) Promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation.