

# Organic Initiative (Environmental Quality Incentives Program)



## What's Available

The Organic Initiative is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS in Virginia is offering more than 40 conservation practices to protect water quality and improve soil health. Practices receiving special emphasis this year include:

- Increasing the Use of Cover Crops
- Implementing No-Till and Reduced Till Methods
- Installing Field Borders and Wildflower Planting
- Establishing Trees and Shrubs

## How to Apply

Program sign-up is continuous with periodic evaluation and preapprovals throughout the year. You will need to file several eligibility forms at the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs. These offices are usually co-located with NRCS.

Farmer applications will be ranked in two separate categories or pools: transitioning farmers and certified organic farmers. (Organic producers may also apply for assistance under general EQIP.)

Certified organic farmers must submit a copy of their current organic system plan (OSP) and maintain their organic certification for their entire EQIP contract. Transitioning organic farmers need to:

- begin or be in the process of transitioning to a certified organic operation.
- submit a self-certification letter agreeing to develop and implement an organic system plan (template available online).
- work with an organic certifying agency.



NRCS offers special funding to help transitioning and certified organic growers install conservation practices that improve soil health and water quality.

You will also need lease agreements or proof you control the land you wish to enroll. If you are already USDA Certified Organic, bring copies of your certification and Organic System Plan to the local NRCS Office.

NRCS will help eligible producers develop a conservation plan, which will become the basis of the EQIP contract. EQIP applications will be ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

## More Information

Information and applications are available at your local NRCS office. Locate the nearest USDA Service Center at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/va/contact/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/va/contact/) and call or stop by to speak with one of our conservation professionals.

Check out [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org) (National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service) and [www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/organic.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/organic.shtml) (Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services) for additional resources.

## Virginia Overview

Organic farming positively impacts our environment and is one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture. Native pollinators, beneficial insects that attack plant pests, and wildlife also benefit from organic systems.

NRCS in Virginia offers financial and technical assistance for certified organic farmers and those interested in transitioning to organic production to address their soil, water, and plant health resource concerns.

For more information, visit the USDA National Organic Program website at [www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program](http://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program) to learn more.

Virginia

Natural Resources Conservation Service

[nrcs.va.usda.gov/](http://nrcs.va.usda.gov/)

