

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



## One Program, Many Facets

Do you want to improve soil and water quality on your farm by:

- Excluding livestock from streams?
- Installing grazing and animal waste handling systems?
- Planting cover crops and reducing tillage?

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can help. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance for planning and implementing conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related natural resources on agricultural and non-industrial forestlands.

## How EQIP Works

Our conservationists consult with you to develop an EQIP plan of operation and contract. If you have a confined livestock feeding operation, we will also help you prepare the required comprehensive nutrient management plan.

EQIP contracts run from one to 10 years and are limited to \$450,000 per individual. Eligible producers receive financial assistance payments to implement approved conservation practices on eligible land or to help develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) to address specific land use issues.

Practice installation will commence during the first year of the contract. You receive payments on completed



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary conservation programs that help agricultural producers make their operations more sustainable and productive.

practices or activities identified in an EQIP contract that meet NRCS standards.

Payment rates are set each fiscal year and are attached to the EQIP contract when it is approved. Rates for each conservation practice can be found online at [www.va.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov).

## Special Fund Pools

Ten percent of all EQIP funds have been set aside to assist historically underserved clients. Landowners certify they belong to one of these groups. Veterans who are beginning farmers can also receive preference in applying for 2014 Farm Bill programs.

New and beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran, and limited resource farmers can receive financial assistance payments of up to 90 percent of the costs for installing conservation practices. Eligible individuals may also receive up to 50 percent in advance for purchasing materials or contracting.

## Who Can Apply

EQIP applications are ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Applicants must:

Control or own eligible agricultural or forest land.

Be engaged in agriculture or forestry and have a farm number and tract established with the Farm Service Agency

Have an adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than \$900,000 (Federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes are exempt)

Comply with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements

Develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations that addresses at least one natural resource concern.

## 2017 Resource Concerns

EQIP eligible land includes crop-, range-, pasture-, non-industrial private forest-, and other farm or ranch lands. Our 2017 EQIP offerings focus on the resource concerns listed below.

**Livestock Operations.** You can receive assistance with animal waste storage and handling facilities for livestock (including dairy, swine, and poultry) and efficient application of organic nutrients.

A Virginia Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is required when payment is for a waste facility. Funding is available to assist with the development of a CNMP.

### Sample practices:

Waste Storage Facility, Animal Mortality Facility, Nutrient Management, Heavy Use Area Protection, Fencing

**Grazing Lands.** Assistance is available for planning and implementing rotational grazing systems, excluding livestock from streams, establishing riparian buffers, and applying nutrients more efficiently.

For prescribed grazing payments, all components of the prescribed grazing plan must be in place and livestock managed according to the plan.

### Sample practices:

Access Control & Fencing, Heavy Use Area, Pasture & Hayland Planting, Prescribed Grazing, Riparian Buffers or 10-Ft. Setbacks, Nutrient Management, Water Troughs & Pipelines

**Cropland.** You can get assistance for improving soil quality with crop rotations, cover crops, and high residue crop



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production, using no-till with erosion control practices. Payments may only be made to applicants who have not adopted the practice on fields that will be in the contract.

### Sample practices:

Controlled Traffic Farming, Residue & Tillage Management, Cover Crop, Grassed Waterways, Field Border, Nutrient Management

**Organic Farming Initiative.** Assistance is available for current certified organic producers and those transitioning to organic farming. This initiative addresses soil, water, air, plant, animal, and energy conservation concerns. A \$20,000 per year (\$80,000 over six years) payment limit is placed on applications within this special pool.

### Sample practices:

Controlled Traffic Farming, Nutrient Management (Organic), Prescribed Grazing, Residue & Tillage Management, Irrigation Water Management

**Shellfish Aquaculture.** Shellfish growers can receive help with gear cycling/disposal and restoration of declining shellfish beds to improve the water quality shellfish need to thrive.

### Sample practices:

Gear Cycling/Disposal, Establishment of Rare & Declining Habitat

## How to Apply

Stop by your local USDA Service Center or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted). (Find your local USDA Service Center at <http://offices.usda.gov>.)



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