



Natural Resources
Conservation Service - Delaware

Conservation Fact Sheet Organic Farming

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

As part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the 2014 Farm Bill.

The conservation provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill will affect farmers for years to come. New provisions continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decade. Existing programs have been simplified and consolidated to address high priority environmental protection goals. In addition to addressing a broad range of environmental goals, the 2014 Farm Bill includes increased financial assistance for beginning farmers, historically underserved producers and Veterans.

Contact your local NRCS field office for more information.



Contact NRCS:

Delaware
USDA Service Centers

Kent County: 302-741-2600

New Castle County: 302-832-3100

Sussex County: 302-856-3990

(Select extension 3 for NRCS)

Purpose

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial assistance for conservation practices related to organic production through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Background

Agricultural producers who are certified organic and those who are transitioning to organic production are eligible to apply to EQIP.

Each fiscal year, NRCS will focus financial and technical assistance through the EQIP Organic Initiative for eligible applicants and land. The applicant must demonstrate control of eligible land in agricultural production. Eligible land includes cropland, pastureland, and other farm lands.

Organic farmers also are eligible to apply to the general EQIP program, which offers a greater range of conservation practices.

Examples of EQIP Assistance for Organics

<i>Resource Benefit</i>	<i>Conservation Practice</i>
Soil Sustainability (Healthy Soils)	Conservation Crop Rotation Cover Crop
Water Quality	Conservation Crop Rotation Cover Crop Field Border Filter Strip
Water Quantity	Irrigation Water Management Irrigation System, Microirrigation Structure for Water Control
Plant (Healthy and Productive)	Nutrient Management Pest Management
Livestock	Waste Management Systems Watering Systems Pasture and Hayland Planting Fencing (rotational grazing systems) Prescribed Grazing Forage Harvest Management



Conservation Planning

For more than 80 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers with conservation plans to meet their environmental and economic goals, while concurrently planning for the protection of the soil, water, air and wildlife resources. Conservation goals are highly individual and may certainly 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 work with farmers to come up with scientifically-sound alternatives for accomplishing their goals and working out a timeline to implement the conservation practices in the plan.

More Information

- Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals to begin the program application process.
- Information and application forms are available on our website.

Who can apply?

- Farmers who own or manage certified organic operations or operations that are transitioning to certified organic may apply.
- Interested farmers must also meet eligibility requirements of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) available by visiting www.de.nrcs.usda.gov and clicking on Programs/Financial Assistance/EQIP.

Certified organic farmers need to:

- ➔ submit a copy of their current organic system plan (OSP) when they apply.
- ➔ maintain their organic certification for the entire length of their EQIP contract.

Transitioning organic farmers need to:

- ➔ begin or be in the process of transitioning to a certified organic operation. This requirement also applies to producers earning less than \$5,000 annually in agricultural sales.
- ➔ submit a self certification letter stating that they agree to develop and implement an organic system plan. A template for this letter is available online.
- ➔ be working with an organic certifying agency.
- There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP, however, projects that address significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding. Payments are limited to a maximum of \$20,000 per year and \$80,000 for life of Farm Bill (2014 through 2018).
- Beginning, socially disadvantaged and limited-resource farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.

When to apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria for each program is available on our website.