

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program Organic Initiative

2009 FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
New Jersey

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program for persons who are engaged in livestock, forestry or agricultural production, including organic production. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

## 2009 Organic Initiative

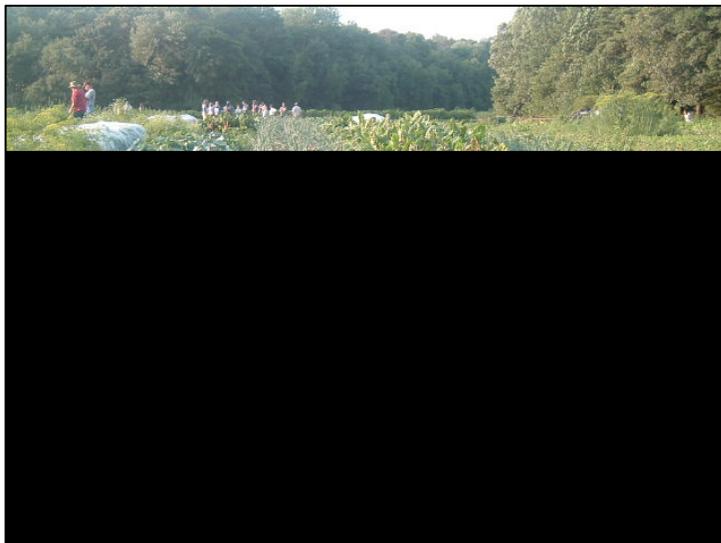
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices in New Jersey will accept applications for financial assistance under a special Organic Initiative sign-up between May 11 and May 29, 2009. National Organic Program (NOP) certified organic producers, as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production, are eligible to apply. New Jersey received an allocation of \$357,706 as part of the 2009 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative to encourage more organic agriculture production.

Under this initiative, a producer's conservation goals may include transitioning to organic agriculture, boosting pollinator populations, increasing biodiversity including soil-borne organisms, enhancing water quality, controlling invasive species or dozens of other resource-enhancing possibilities. Practices that are linked to one of these resource concerns may be eligible for a conservation payment.

Certain conservation practices will receive an increased payment rate under the Organic Initiative. These are: Cover Crop; Nutrient Management; Pest Management; and Prescribed Grazing. These payment rates and the rates for other eligible conservation practices are available in the [2009 Practice Catalog](#). Farmers who want to apply for financial assistance may receive up to \$20,000/year and are limited to \$80,000 over a six-year period.

Payments are not authorized for activities or practice components which are solely production related and are not linked to an identified resource concern. Payments may not be used for any costs related to organic certification.

Producers must meet basic [program eligibility guidelines](#) to be eligible to apply. Application forms are available on-line at [www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip). Interested producers should visit their nearest [USDA Service Center](#) to file an application.



## Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for EQIP and this special funding, the applicant must:

- Be an agricultural operation that produces at least \$1,000 in agricultural products in 2 of the last 5 years or has IRS Schedule F form showing profit or loss from a farm operation
- Must own or have control of the land (by lease or rental agreement) for length of contract
- Must be actively engaged in farm operation
- May be an individual, entity or joint operation
- Be registered in the USDA Service Center Information Database (SCIMS)
- Be certified as organic according to the National Organic Program OR be in the process of transitioning to organic production

## Farms under \$5,000 in Revenue per Year

Current USDA organic certification rules do not require producers who sell less than \$5,000 a year to have an annual Organic System Plan (OSP). However, if they elect to pursue organic certification and use this Organic Initiative to assist in their transition to organic certification, they will be required to implement conservation practices that are consistent with an Organic System Plan (OSP) the same as those who are already certified.

## What is an Organic System Plan?

An Organic System Plan is a written management plan that covers all components of an organic production and handling system. Such a plan must be developed annually and must include:

1. A description of practices and procedures to be performed and maintained;
2. A list of each substance to be used in production or handling, indicating its composition, source, location(s) where it will be used, and documentation of commercial availability;
3. A description of the monitoring practices and procedures to be performed and maintained, including their frequency;
4. A description of the record keeping system implemented to comply with established requirements;
5. A description of the management practices and physical barriers established to prevent co-mingling of organic and non-organic products on a split operation and to prevent contact of organic production and handling operations and products with prohibited substances; and
6. Additional information deemed necessary by the certifying agent (CA) to evaluate compliance with the regulations.

The OSP is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>).

## Applications for the Organic Initiative

Producers can apply for assistance under the EQIP Organic Initiative program prior to May 29, 2009 for current year funds. Applicants must have or be willing to develop an Organic System Plan on their land, as follows:

- If already certified as organic, bring a copy of your Organic System Plan for review.
- If transitioning to organic, submit a self-certification letter to the NRCS district conservationist stating your intent to do so. The NRCS can provide a template for self-certification if needed.

NRCS conservationists will work with you to develop a conservation plan based on your organic system plan and farm goals. The plan will specify a timeline to implement the conservation practices identified in the organic system plan. Conservation planning assistance is *free* and does not require participation in cost-share programs.



**Sign up by May 29, 2009 for practices you wish to install this year!**

## For More Information or to Sign Up, Contact Your Local USDA Service Center:

*Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties*

### **Columbus Service Center**

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road, Columbus NJ 08036

Telephone: (609) 267-1639

*Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties*

### **Freehold Service Center**

4000 Kozloski Rd. Box 5033, Freehold, NJ 07728

Telephone: (732) 462-0075

*Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties*

### **Frenchtown Service Center**

687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Telephone: (908) 782-4614

*Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties*

### **Hackettstown Service Center**

Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Rd, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Telephone: (908) 852-2576

*Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties*

### **Vineland Service Center**

1317 South Main Rd. Bldg 3, Vineland, NJ 08360

Telephone: (856) 205-1225

*Gloucester and Salem counties*

### **Woodstown Service Center**

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2, Woodstown, NJ 08098

Telephone: (856) 769-1126

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

5/11/09