

Financial Assistance Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 5237S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

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4/17/09

**Re: Docket Number NRCS- IFR-08005" Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Final Rules**

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Control of food in our country must be in the hands of those who are mindful of its quality and importance. Food is sacred and should not be treated as another commodity where highest yields are rewarded despite the environmental repercussions, negative economic impacts, and associated public health concerns.

The USDA needs to encourage that the EQIP rule be clarified, in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill, to EQIP assistance to be available to all farmers and ranchers for comprehensive whole farm conservation planning.

The final EQIP rule must also require NRCS State Conservationists to rank and process applications for organic conversion assistance in a separate funding pool and makers clear that the limit of \$80,000 over a 4-year period applies only to organic conversion payments and not all EQIP payments made to organic farmers and ranchers.

I recommend that the NRCS amend the EQIP rule to prohibit the use of EQIP funding for animal waste storage, treatment or transportation for new or expanding CAFOs and that the EQIP rule does not allow waivers to increase assistance to CAFOs above the \$300,000 payment limit.

Numerous studies have proven conclusively that corporate CAFOs have negative impacts on water quality, decrease the value of their neighbor's property, and harbor antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threatens human health.

It's time that organic farmers and ranchers stand on a equal footing with conventional producers in funding amounts they receive from the USDA's EQIP funding. This can easily be done if the USDA follows the rules of protecting the people and our collective resources over the interests of giant corporate agribusinesses

Please stand up for independent family farmers and ranchers and swiftly enact these recommendations.

Sincerely,



William J. Fischer
6015 Waterman Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63112