

ATTN: Docket Number NRCS- IFR-08005

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

3/18/09

Dear USDA Staff:

Please make the Federal Conservation Programs Friendly for Organics. Make the EQIP more inclusive of organic agriculture practices – including implementing a new provision that assists farmers converting to organic farming systems and rewarding the conservation benefits of organic farming.

My family encourages the USDA to make the following changes to the Final Rule for EQIP:

- Acknowledge organic agriculture as a new National Priority for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), as mandated by Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill. The Chief of NRCS should issue a Directive to all State Conservationists reinforcing this change.
- Clarify that the \$80,000 cap for Organic Conversion Support contracts applies only to organic conversion plans, and does not cover all organic operations applying to EQIP.
- Also, clarify that the regular cap of \$300,000 applies to organic operators who are not seeking conversion support.
- Ensure that Organic Conversion Support is available in all 50 states.
- Ensure that Organic Conversion Support applications are ranked and processed as a separate subcategory.

A personal note from our family about real homeland security – the right to grow our own food and eat healthy organic sustainably produced food for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Christopher McHugh

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**With Great Faith That Our Government Agencies Will Do the Right Thing and
Protect Our Basic Rights to HEALTHY LOCAL SUSTAINABLE FOOD!**