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April 16, 2009

Financial Assistance Programs Division - FAX (202) 720-4265
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW. Room 5237S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

The EQIP program is intended to help farmers afford conservation measures, taking care of the environment and the soil, things like erosion control and avoiding toxic run-off. I feel dismay learning that taxpayer dollars have been given to big corporate factory farms and not used for conservation purposes. Why not give the funds to help support sustainable and organic farmers who want to protect the environment and need the assistance?

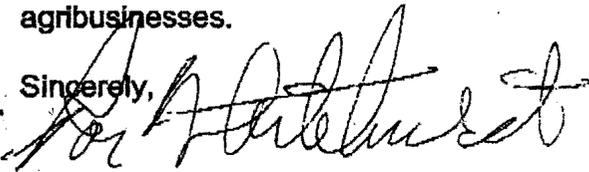
The 2008 Farm Bill directs the USDA to make EQIP assistance available to all farmers and ranchers for comprehensive whole farm conservation planning.

The final EQIP rule must also require NRCS State Conservationists to rank and process applications for organic conversion assistance in a separate funding pool that makes 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.

Stop allowing EQIP funding for animal waste storage, treatment or transportation for new or expanding CAFOs and stop the waivers to increase assistance to CAFOs above the \$300,000 payment limit! CAFOs pollute and stink and harbor antibiotic-resistant bacteria, among other negative impacts on the environment and human health.

Organic farmers and ranchers deserve to stand on an equal footing with conventional producers in funding amounts they receive from EQIP. The USDA is supposed to protect the people and our collective resources over the interests of giant corporate agribusinesses.

Sincerely,



Ron Whitehurst, President and CEO
American Organic Products