



EQIP 101: Treating Natural Resource Concerns with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers to address soil, water, air and related natural resources concerns on their land.

Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develops contracts with farmers to implement conservation practices to improve areas of environmental natural resource concerns. Payments are made to producers once conservation practices are completed according to NRCS requirements.

Eligibility

Persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production and owners of non-industrial private forestland are eligible for the program. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, private non-industrial forestland, and other farm or ranch lands. Persons interested in entering into a cost-share agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time. Applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the Farm Bill; and
- Develop an EQIP plan of operations.

These plans include the participant's specific conservation and environmental objectives to be achieved, one or more conservation practices to achieve those objectives and the schedule for implementing the conservation practices.

If an EQIP contract includes an animal waste storage or treatment facility, the participant must implement a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). If an EQIP plan of operations addresses non-industrial private forestland, the participant must implement a forest management plan.

How EQIP Works

NRCS works with the participant to develop the EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the EQIP contract. NRCS provides conservation practice payments to landowners under these contracts, that can be up to 10 years in duration.

Program payments to a person or entity are limited to \$300,000 for all contracts entered into during any 6-year period. This limitation includes unpaid prior year contract obligations as of October 1, 2008, as well as new contract obligations.

Payments received for technical assistance shall be excluded from this limitation. Payment limitations for organic production may not exceed an aggregate \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 during any 6-year period for installing conservation practices.

Socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers are eligible for an increased financial assistance. Farmers in key initiative areas, like the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, are also eligible for increased financial assistance.

More Information

For more information and updates about EQIP and other Farm Bill topics, please visit www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/ programs.