

USDA Invests in Iowa Organic Farmers

Written by John Crabtree
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Iowa farmers transitioning to organic systems as well as established organic producers now have an opportunity to apply for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative funding to assist their organic efforts.

The USDA recently announced another \$50 million in funding for the EQIP Organic Initiative, which provides a 75% share of the cost of implementing organic conservation measures to those who qualify - 90% for beginning, limited-resource and socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

This is the third year of the Organic Initiative. In 2010, NRCS obligated \$24 million nationally with over \$1.4 million going to Iowa organic farmers. This year even greater funding is available for Iowa producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production. The deadline for this application period is May 20, 2011.

The Center for Rural Affairs has a long history of assisting family farmers and ranchers in accessing new conservation programs. We created an EQIP Organic Initiative fact sheet available at - <http://www.cfra.org/node/2509> - and we operate a Farm Bill Helpline where producers can call [\(402\) 687-2100](tel:4026872100), ask for the Farm Bill Helpline and speak to a real person who can help producers receive assistance in accessing new programs like the EQIP organic initiative.

The Farm Bill Helpline can also assist farmers and ranchers with the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnerships Initiative, the Value Added Agricultural Market Development Program and a host of Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs.

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