

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR IDAHO'S ORGANIC PRODUCERS

Boise, ID, January 26, 2011 – Farmers involved in organic production may qualify for funds to implement conservation practices related to organic agriculture through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) overseen by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS encourages producers to apply for the EQIP "Organic Initiative" by March 4, 2011 to be considered for this year's funds.

"Organic farmers can resolve existing environmental problems on their farm by carrying out specific conservation practices," said Clint Evans, Idaho Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. "The Organic Initiative provides financial and technical assistance to help implement those practices."

Producers who are currently certified organic and those transitioning to organic production systems are eligible to apply for the program.

"Applicants will need to complete a screening worksheet for either certified organic operation or transitioning to organic production," Evans said. "But eligible producers could receive up to 75 percent of the cost to install conservation practices."

Producers are also required to develop and carry out an Organic System Plan. These plans must be approved by the Idaho Department of Agriculture or a USDA accredited certifier. Applicants with certified organic operations must submit a copy of their current Organic System Plan. Transitioning producers must submit a self-certification letter agreeing to develop and implement an organic system plan.

"NRCS has a variety of conservation practices under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that can help organic producers," said Marlon Winger, NRCS State Agronomist. "For example, planting cover crops to increase nitrogen in the soil or improving plant health through crop rotation or more efficient nutrient management using compost."

To learn more about the conservation practices or the Organic Initiative, contact the NRCS office in your area. Find the one nearest you at <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/> and click the link "Find a Service Center" at the end of the list on the left side.

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