

March 14, 2012

Financial Assistance Available for Colorado's Organic Producers
2012 application funding cycles are March 30, 2012 and June 1, 2012

Denver – The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced a funding opportunity for certified organic producers and those transitioning to organic production to implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. In 2012, approximately \$300,000 is available to encourage more organic agriculture production in Colorado.

While applications are accepted on a continuous basis, the cutoff dates for funding is **Friday, March 30, 2012** and **Friday June 1, 2012**.

Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS field office located in a USDA Service Center in their county (listed online at <http://offices.usda.gov>). Field office staff will be available to answer questions on the initiative and offer technical assistance on developing a comprehensive conservation plan.

“This opportunity will allow more producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production,” said Phyllis Ann Philipps, State Conservationist, Colorado NRCS, Denver.

These practices could include irrigation water management, nutrient and pest management, cover crops, conservation crop rotation, residue and tillage management, seasonal high tunnels, field borders, field strips, and prescribed grazing.

Organic Initiative funding is provided through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. The 2008 Farm Bill provides assistance specifically for organic farm operations and those converting to organic production.

Under EQIP Organic Initiative contracts, NRCS provides financial payments and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation measures in keeping with organic production. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers may obtain additional assistance.

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Eligible producers could receive financial assistance to install conservation practices on their operation. NRCS encourages individuals who are beginning farmers/ranchers or those who have limited resources to apply for the program, if organic production is their goal.

Transitioning producers must submit a self-certification letter with a statement of agreement to develop and implement a conservation plan consistent with an Organic System Plan (OSP). The name of a USDA accredited certifying agent working with the producer must accompany the application.

Certified organic producers must submit a copy of their current OSP as well as provide the name and contact information of the USDA accredited certifying agent who certified the organic operation.

For additional information regarding the fiscal year 2012 Organic Initiative, please call and make an appointment with your local NRCS field office staff (listed online at <http://offices.usda.gov>) or visit www.co.nrcs.usda.gov.

In 2012, USDA will commemorate and celebrate the 150th anniversary of our founding in 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act of Congress establishing the United States Department of Agriculture.

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