

\$50 Million in Funds for Organics Available

From May 11 to May 29, current or transitioning organic farmers can apply for funding as supported through the USDA EQIP Program.

If you're a producer certified through the National Organic Program or if you're in the process of transitioning to organic production, you may qualify for \$50 million in new funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to encourage greater production of organic food.

Applications for funding from eligible applicants are being accepted May 11 through May 29.

In keeping with the 2008 Farm Bill's commitment to assisting organic producers, the funding is available as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan says, "The objective of this initiative is to make organic food producers eligible to compete for EQIP financial assistance."

How to Get Started

To apply, producers must contact their state's EQIP program office. The property that producers are interested in enrolling must be located in that state.

Each state's EQIP page will tell you about application ranking criteria, priority resource concerns, lists of eligible practices, payment rates, information about where you can submit applications, eligibility requirements and other program requirements, according to the USDA.

Visit the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service EQIP Web page to learn more about EQIP and find a link to each state's EQIP program department.

Under the \$50 million initiative, according to the USDA, new contracts for organic production are being offered for six core practices: Conservation crop rotation Cover crops Nutrient management Pest management Prescribed grazing Forage harvest management

Funding is capped at \$20,000 per year.

States must consider using any appropriate practice that meets the resource concern on a particular operation, says the USDA.