



Farmers: Apply for Hoop House Funding

USDA's three-year hoop house program aims to increase availability of local food.

December 28, 2009

Farmers in 38 states can apply for funding by Jan. 15, 2010 to build a hoop house. Small farmers and urban farmers can apply for USDA funding to build hoop houses as part of a new pilot project under the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service launched the three-year program in 38 states to increase the availability of locally grown produce in a conservation-friendly way. NRCS will provide financial assistance for the project through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the EQIP Organic Initiative and the Agricultural Management Assistance program.

A seasonal hoop house is a greenhouse-like structure, at least 6 feet in height, which modifies the climate inside to create more favorable growing conditions for vegetable and other specialty crops grown in the natural soil beneath it. Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, hoop houses are easy to build, maintain and move. Hoop houses are used year-round in parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers—a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers.

This pilot will test the potential conservation benefits of growing crops under hoop houses. Participating farms can receive funding for one hoop house. Hoop houses in the study can cover as much as 5 percent of 1 acre, or approximately 30 feet by 72 feet.

Farmers who would like to sign-up for the hoop house pilot should call or visit the NRCS office at a local USDA service center by Jan. 15, 2010. USDA service center locations are listed on the USDA website.

For more information about hoop houses, read "Tools of the Trade: Hoop Houses" by Jim Ruen.