

## **FY 2013 Specialty Crop Initiative for Mississippi**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this initiative is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to **Specialty Crop Farmers**. The target audience is defined as any farm with less than \$250,000 a year in sales and growing a non-traditional specialty crops. (Landowner must provide IRS Schedule F from one of the last 3 years where the landowner did not have \$250,000 or more in gross farm sales.)

Specialty crops are defined in law as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” This definition, although more exact than previous legal definitions, leaves a certain amount of latitude in interpretation. The legal definition of specialty crops is, however, intimately tied to the definition of horticulture and its various components.

Examples of specialty crops eligible for this initiative include potatoes, greens, beans, peas, pecans, blueberries, and fruit trees. The following are not specialty crops: cotton, soybeans, peanuts, and any other recognized commodity crop.

We must be innovative in allowing specialty crop farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for specialty crops operations to implement and maintain.

In developing and implementing this outreach initiative in Mississippi, NRCS technical practices and programs will help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by specialty crop farmers.

The resource concerns to be addressed in Mississippi are:

- (1) Surface Water Quality – runoff of nutrients and organics
- (2) Water Quantity – water management and irrigation
- (3) Soil Quality – erosion control above soil loss tolerance (T)

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION AND PROCEDURE**

**Reference applicable EQIP practice pages in EQIP Manual for scenario changes, eligible components, and associated practices for FY2013.**

## **Eligibility**

All specialty crop initiative funds will be used to help farms with less than \$250,000 a year in sales and growing one of the non-traditional specialty crops.

Eligible land is cropland. Applicants must self-certify a cropping history of specialty crops for the last two years on offered acres.

All participants must be registered in the Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) or grant permission to be registered in SCIMS.

**2013 Historically-Underserved (HU) rate of compensation will be used when the participant has applied under Specialty Crop Initiative and meets HU (BF, LRF, SD) criteria (90% rate of compensation).**

**2013 EQIP Base rate of compensation will be used when the participant has NOT met any of the HU criteria yet does meet Specialty Crop Initiative guidelines.**

Conservation tillage (329 - Residue Management) is an allowable practice because the low adoption rate in Mississippi is considered extremely low for specialty crop program farmers. The practice is eligible as a continuous long term system.

Existing field office technical standards are available to accomplish conservation planning for this specialty crop initiative.

NRCS will develop and apply innovative and cost effective technical standards according to policy and place in the field office technical guide.

**ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICE INFORMATION:**

The following table lists conservation practices eligible for payment under the **Specialty Crop**

**Initiative:**

<b>Conservation Practices Eligible For Payment Practice Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Units</b>
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	No
104	Nutrient Management Plan	No
118	Irrigation Water Management Plan –Written	No
130	Drainage Water Management Plan – Written	No
146	Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Plan	No
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	Ac
329	Residue Management	Ac
340	Cover Crop	Ac
342	Critical Area Planting	Ac
350	Sediment Basin	CuYd
356	Dike	CuYd
362	Diversion	CuYd
386	Field Border	Ac
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	Ac or Each
393	Filter Strip	Ac
410*	Grade Stabilization Structure	Each
412	Grassed Waterway	Ac
430	Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline	LnFt
436	Irrigation Storage Reservoir	CuYd
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	Ac or SqFt
442	Irrigation System, Sprinkler	Variable
449	Irrigation Water Management	Ac or Each
460	Land Clearing	Ac
464	Irrigation Land Leveling	CuYd
484	Mulching	Ac or SqFt
516	Pipeline	Ft
533	Pumping Plant	Variable
580*	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	LnFt
587	Structure for Water Control	Variable
590	Nutrient Management	Ac or Each
600	Terrace	Ft
601	Vegetative Barrier	LnFt
642*	Water Well	LnFt