



Mississippi EQIP Organic Farming Questions and Answers

1. What kind of program is EQIP Organic?

NRCS has set aside a separate EQIP fund to help Mississippi organic farmers and those that are transitioning to organic production. EQIP has always been available to organic producers, but with the new Farm Bill specific funds are being set aside to assist organic producers. The goal of this state-wide organic farming program is to assist producers with making beneficial, cost effective changes to production systems for cool and warm season vegetables and herbs.

2. What types of land are eligible to be enrolled?

Cropland, grazing land, and orchards are eligible to be enrolled.

3. What are the core organic practices cost shared through this program?

Cover crops, crop rotation, nutrient management, pest management, prescribed grazing, forage harvest management and a number of other conservation practices are eligible.

4. Who is eligible?

Certified organic producers or producers transitioning to organic farming who have **gross farm sales of \$1,000 or more** are eligible to apply.

5. When do I need to apply?

Applications for EQIP are taken continuously throughout the year. However, to be considered for Fiscal Year 2009 EQIP Organic funding, producers need to have an application signed and on file at their local NRCS office by **June 12, 2009**.

6. What do I have to do to apply?

You must complete an application at your local NRCS office. Also, you must complete an Organic Farm Plan with the Mississippi Dept. of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC). You must review and sign a copy of Becoming A Certified Organic Grower (a Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service booklet).

7. How much cost share assistance is available?

Farmers may receive up to \$20,000 per year or \$80,000 over 6 years.

8. Who needs to be certified?

Producers and operations that sell more than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products must be certified in order to use the USDA Organic label on their product.

Producers and handling (processing) operations that sell less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from certification. They may label their products organic if they abide by the standards, but they cannot display the USDA Organic seal.

9. What happens if I fail to complete the transition to organic farming?

Each year NRCS completes a contract review to determine if a participant has transitioned to organic farming and has followed the approved conservation plan. Failure to complete the transition to organic farming may result in recovery costs and liquidated damages being assessed to the participant.

10. Are orchards eligible for this program?

Orchards are eligible as long as the orchard is part of an organic farm plan.

