

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Opportunities for Organic Producers  
Farm Bill 2008 Conservation Programs**

***UT Plant Sciences Workshop***

**October 7, 2009**

Helping People Help the Land 1

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**USDA/NRCS Presents Opportunities for  
Organic Producers**

- Organic Initiative – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Cooperative Partnership Initiative (CCPI) – Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
- Enhancements – Conservation Stewardship Program

Helping People Help the Land 2

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Goals of NRCS:**

- Help Organic Producers increase production
- Help Organic Producers address natural resource concerns
- Provide conservation practices which achieve both purposes

Helping People Help the Land 3

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Hurdles for NRCS and Organic Farmers**

- NRCS is very new to Organic Production Systems
- High Costs
  - Labor, equipment
- Soil Quality
  - Nutrients, organic matter
- Pest Management
  - Weeds, insects, left-over-plastic

Helping People Help the Land 4

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Organic Initiative**

- Administration supports sustainable agriculture
- NRCS set-aside \$50 million for organic producers
- Offered under the EQIP program
- Landowners apply at their local Farm Service Center
- Applicants can be Certified Organic or Transitioning to Certified Organic
- Applicants can choose from Conservation Practices offered in EQIP

Helping People Help the Land 5

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Organic Initiative**

- NRCS can NOT pay for:
  - Infrastructure - green houses, high tunnels, shipping sheds
  - Machinery – tractors, mulch and drip tape layers, planter
- NRCS can pay for:
  - Materials – seed, nutrients, natural mulch
  - Labor – cost associated with management or installation of a practice
- Payments are for installing a practice that improves a natural resource

Helping People Help the Land 6

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Organic Initiative - EQIP**

- FY 2009 - review
  - Practices didn't really fit Organic systems
  - Payment rate was not adequate to cover cost
- FY 2010 – looking ahead
  - Offer practices with specific intent to address Organic systems
  - Increase payment rate to cover actual expense
  - More participation

Helping People Help the Land 7

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Conservation Practices - EQIP**

- Cover Crops
  - Establish plant communities for beneficials
  - Nitrogen fixing crops between beds (alley cropping)
- Field Border and Filter Strips
  - Establish plant species that attract beneficials
  - Buffer ponds and fields from inorganic products
- Contour Farming
  - Row/bed set-up to reduce erosion

Helping People Help the Land 8

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**Conservation Practices - EQIP**

- Fence
  - Pest Management for crops
  - Increased management for animals with prescribed grazing
- Irrigation Management
  - Soil Moisture Monitor
  - Roof Runoff Structures
  - Water Well – convert from using city water
- Composting
  - Install a composting facility to decrease labor and address significant water quality resource concern

Helping People Help the Land 9

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**CCPI - WHIP**

- Aimed at increasing wildlife and pollinator habitat
- Partnership with TWRA
- Opportunity to increase pollinators and beneficials
- Helps Organic Systems indirectly

Helping People Help the Land 10

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**CSP – Enhancements**

- Program rewards operators with good stewardship
- Provides annual payment to eligible operators
- Offers activities to increase conservation on-farm
- If eligible, operators choose activities called enhancements for points that determine payment amounts
- Several enhancements are available to Organic Producers

Helping People Help the Land 11

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

**CSP – Enhancements Examples**

- Crops
  - Integrated Pest Management
  - Plastic Mulching for Moisture Control
  - Use of Non-chemical Methods to kill Cover Crops
  - Habitat Development for Beneficials
  - Use of 2 or more cover crop mixes
  - Locally Grown and Marketed Farm Products
  - Several more

Helping People Help the Land 12

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill 

### CSP – Enhancements Examples

- Animals
  - Transition to Organic Grazing Systems
  - Non-chemical Pest Control of Livestock
  - Solar Powered electric fence charging systems
  - Rotation of supplement and feeding areas
- More
  - Fuel Use Reduction
  - Recycle 100% of farm lubricants

*Helping People Help the Land* 13

USDA NRCS  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill 

### Overview

- USDA – NRCS is committed to increasing opportunities for Organic Producers
- Several Conservation Programs
- Anyone can apply

*Helping People Help the Land* 14

**QUESTIONS?**