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2008 Farm Bill 

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

***UT Plant Sciences Workshop***

**October 7, 2009**

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**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

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**Goals of NRCS:**

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

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**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

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**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

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**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

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### 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

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### 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

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### 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

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### CCPI - WHIP

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

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### 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

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### 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

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### 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

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### Overview

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

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**QUESTIONS?**