

# **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
(USDA)**

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# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

To provide assistance to agricultural producers in order to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental requirements.

# NATIONAL EQIP PRIORITIES

- Reduction of non-point source pollution.
- Reduction of emissions.
- Reduction of soil erosion.
- Promotion of at-risk species habitat.

# FLORIDA EQIP PRIORITIES

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity
- Soil Erosion
- Animal & Plant Health

# PERSON ELIGIBILITY

Persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production are eligible for the program, with the following limitations:

- Federal and State governments.
- Applicant must be in compliance with HEL and Wetland Conservation Provisions.
- Payment limitations of \$450,000 per individual or entity for all fiscal year 2002-2007 EQIP contracts.
- Applicants are ineligible if their average adjusted gross income (AGI) for the previous three years exceeds \$2.5 million (unless 75% or more is derived from agricultural activities).

# LAND ELIGIBILITY

- Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture, and private non-industrial forest land, and other land determined to pose a serious threat to soil, air, water or related resources.
- Irrigation applications – land must have been irrigated two of the last five years.

# PRODUCER ELIGIBILITY

- An individual, entity or joint operation.
- Engaged in livestock or agricultural production.
- The land being offered for enrollment is used in agricultural or livestock production.
- A minimum of \$1,000 or more of agricultural products produced and sold or IRS Schedule F form showing profit or loss from farm operations.

# AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

- Is defined as farm or ranch operations involving the production of crops including but not limited to: Grains / Row Crops, Tobacco, Seed Crops, Vegetables / Fruits, Hay / Forage / Pasture, Orchards / Vineyards, Flowers / Bulbs, Naval Stores, Field-grown Ornamentals, Plant Materials / Plant Materials in Greenhouses, Trees (private non-industrial forest land), Other agricultural commodities or other crops used for subsistence or other crops identified by the State Conservationist in consultation with State Technical Committee.



# LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

- Is defined as farm or ranch operations involving production, growing, raising, or reproduction of livestock or livestock products for food or fiber including but not limited to: Dairy / Beef Cattle, Buffalo, Poultry / Turkeys, Swine, Sheep / Goats, Horses\*, Fish, Ostriches / Emu, Other animals as identified by the State Conservationist in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

\* Horses (non-food or fiber) were added in 2004 identified by the State Conservationist. However the facility must be a legitimate business as defined by the IRS and Schedule F and must be harvesting hay or maintaining pasture and excludes racetracks, sales facilities and fairgrounds.

# LIVESTOCK RELATED PRACTICES

- Fencing - interior only
- Water Facilities – pond or well, pipeline, troughs, etc.
- Livestock Shade Structure
- Pasture & Hayland Planting
- Nutrient Management
- Pest Management (invasive species)
- Sensitive Area &/or Streambank Crossing

# HOW TO APPLY FOR EQIP

- Applications are taken on a continuous signup at the local NRCS Office.
- USDA's e-gov web site at:  
<http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>
  - 1) Enter Natural Resources Conservation Service in the agency field.
  - 2) Enter Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the Program Name field.
  - 3) Enter CCC-1200 in the Form Number field.

# EQIP PRACTICE PAYMENTS

- Regular cost share rates for Florida are up to 50%.
- Confined Livestock Operations cost share rates are up to 75% (must meet specified criteria).
- Limited Resource Farmer / Rancher cost share rates are up to 90%.
- Small Farm Initiative cost share rates are up to 75% (must meet specified criteria).

# APPLICATION PROCESS

- Landowner submits an application to NRCS.
- NRCS field office works with applicant to complete the evaluation.
- NRCS field office ranks the applications using the Local Working Group (LWG) ranking criteria.
- When funds are allocated to states the NRCS field office enters into a contract and funds the highest ranking applications.

# CRITERIA USED TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS

- FY07 Ranking Criteria includes a new template with the following:
  - National Priorities
  - State Priorities
  - Local Priorities
  - Efficiency Factor (practice service life, practice average cost, etc.)

# LENGTH OF EQIP CONTRACT

- The 2002 Farm Bill establishes that EQIP contracts will be for a maximum of 10 years.
- At a minimum EQIP contracts can end one year after the practices have been implemented.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EQIP

- Contact the local USDA-NRCS field office.
- Information is also available on the web at:  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002>