

National Bulletin: 300-10-

Subject: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program Support for Organic and Transition to Organic Production Systems–Fiscal Year 2010

**ACTION REQUIRED BY: February XX, 2010 (15 days after administering bulletin)**

**Purpose.** To provide State Conservationists (STCs) and Directors, Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas, with guidance for the fiscal year (FY) 2010 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative.

**Expiration Date.** September 30, 2010

**Background.** This bulletin provides guidance for implementation of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 requirements associated with providing conservation assistance through the national EQIP Organic Initiative; it covers issues concerning both organic producers and those transitioning to organic production systems. To achieve the purposes of the initiative, the Chief has allocated \$50 million in financial assistance and associated technical assistance for FY 2010. EQIP Organic Initiative funds may only be used to address organic-related EQIP contracts. These funds are subject to EQIP program requirements and are to be obligated by May 1, 2010. If these funds cannot be used for organic-related conservation practices within a State by that date, the STC must return the funds to National Headquarters (NHQ) through an allowance change to be redistributed to other States at the discretion of the Chief.

Additional information about the National Organic Program (NOP) and organic certification requirements administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) can be found at: [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/).

**Explanation.** The Chief has established a national FY 2010 Organic Initiative application cutoff date of March 12, 2010, which STCs must advertise and publish on State NRCS Web sites. No STC may establish an application cutoff period earlier than March 12, 2010. Eligible producers include producers who are currently certified organic and producers transitioning to organic production systems. STCs must provide the opportunity for eligible producers to compete for EQIP Organic Initiative benefits separately from other EQIP funding pools and subaccounts established in ProTracts.

To ensure correct and timely implementation, the following actions and procedures are required.

**Actions Required by February XX.** To implement the FY 2010 Organic Initiative, STCs and Directors, Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas, must take the following measures:

- EQIP Organic Initiative Application Cutoff Date — STCs must establish an application cutoff date that is no earlier than March 12, 2010, and must then advertise and publish it on their State NRCS Web site.
- Letter to Deferred Organic Initiative Applicants from FY 2009 — STCs must ensure that all deferred Organic Initiative applicants from FY 2009 have been provided the standard letter generated from ProTracts offering the opportunity to have their application reconsidered for the FY 2010 Organic Initiative.

**DIST:** R, S, L, and National Center Directors

- Funding Pools — STCs must establish two funding pools or subaccounts in ProTracts for administration of funds related to organic producers. One of the ProTracts organic subaccounts must be assigned the account type of "Organic-Transition;" the other must be assigned the account type of "Organic-Certified." STCs may establish additional subaccounts to support the Organic Initiative, but all additional subaccounts must be assigned to one of the two approved organic account types. The requirement to use these two organic fund account types will ensure national consistency, ranking systems specifically related to the needs of these two different producer groups, and easier management of statute and program requirements outlined in this bulletin.
- Screening and Ranking Criteria — STCs must use the approved national organic screening and Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) ranking criteria shown in Attachments A (worksheet to be used for producers in transition to organic), B (worksheet for certified organic producers), and C (AERT guidance for FY 2010). The ranking criteria must be entered into ProTracts in accordance with EQIP policy and AERT requirements for each separate subaccount. States may add additional State or local-level ranking questions if the questions are directly related to addressing identified resource concerns for organic production systems, but must first get them approved by the Deputy Chief for Financial Assistance and Community Development.
- Conservation Practices to Support Organic and Transitioning Operations — STCs must select and advertise the conservation practices for potential EQIP Organic Initiative applicants. STCs must offer and make available any conservation practice that is likely to be needed by organic or transitioning producers in the State. For producers who are transitioning to organic, STCs are also encouraged to offer the "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" Conservation Activity Plan (CAP). STCs must also select and associate natural resource concerns with appropriate conservation practices from the Field Office Technical Guide directly related to organic production systems and requirements of the NOP. The information in Attachment D provides guidance concerning what NRCS practices and resource concerns correspond to NOP requirements; this list is not all inclusive. In selecting conservation practices, STCs should also obtain input from local working groups and State Technical Committees.
- Payment Schedules — STCs must develop separate payment schedules to support the FY 2010 EQIP Organic Initiative. In developing the FY 2010 Organic Initiative payment schedules, STCs must take into consideration increased costs and income foregone as a result of implementing a practice on an organic or transitioning operation. The information in Attachment D provides guidance concerning potential payment schedule considerations for increased Organic Initiative-related costs; this list is not all inclusive. Some increased costs or income forgone may include higher costs related to services and materials and disproportionate losses in crop yields during the practice lifespan. Attachment E provides guidance for adding organic scenario payment rates in FY 2010 payment schedules.
- Payment Rates — STCs must include a program payment rate of 75 percent in all EQIP Organic Initiative payment schedules. For historically underserved program participants, STCs must include a program payment rate of 90 percent.
- Payment Schedule Review — After FY 2010 EQIP Organic Initiative payment schedules are developed, but before they are uploaded to ProTracts, STCs must submit them to NHQ for a quality review. To accomplish this, STCs must post their Organic Initiative payment schedules to the national payment schedule SharePoint Web site, under the FY 2010 directory. When STCs have uploaded their Organic Initiative practice payment schedules, they must send a notification email to Kalven Trice ([kalven.trice@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:kalven.trice@wdc.usda.gov)) and James Rowe ([james.rowe@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:james.rowe@wdc.usda.gov)). The email must identify practices and scenarios established to support this initiative. Within 10 working days, a response will be sent to the STC by email, granting concurrence of the payment schedule scenarios or indicating if adjustments are needed.

**Application Procedures.** To ensure correct implementation, the following procedures are required:

- ProTracts Operations for EQIP Organic Initiative Applicants. — Organic Initiative applications entered into ProTracts under the "Organic" application type invoke required payment limitation

controls. Only program applications associated with account types of "Organic-Certified" or "Organic-Transition" will be tagged with the application type of "Organic." Any EQIP application that is mistakenly tagged as organic, and obligated with funding from a nonorganic subaccount, must be cancelled immediately and no payments may be approved. Additionally, applications must be entered into ProTracts as "Planning" if applicants are pursuing a "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" CAP. Note: Producers may simultaneously apply for EQIP benefits under the Organic Initiative and the other available EQIP program subaccounts. This dual application will enable producers to address resource needs not related to organic production. Regular EQIP payment rates will apply for the non-Organic Initiative contract.

- Transitioning-to-Organic Producers – Application — Producers who are applying for EQIP Organic Initiative assistance to transition their operation to organic production will be required to submit a self-certification letter to the designated conservationist that includes both of the following items:
  1. Statement that the applicant "agrees to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan."
  2. The name of a USDA-accredited certifying agent contacted to begin the organic certification process.

Transitioning-to-organic applicants who fail to provide the self-certification letter or the name of the contacted USDA-accredited certifying agent are not eligible to obtain EQIP Organic Initiative assistance; the application will be deferred until certification is provided. Attachment F provides a self-certification letter template.

Producers who are transitioning to organic should be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to develop a "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" CAP, which helps assure that the producer has adequately identified practices and activities needed to meet statute and NOP provisions. This CAP was specifically created for producers who are transitioning to organic and is not available to producers who are already certified organic.

- Certified Organic Producers – Application — In order to qualify for EQIP Organic Initiative assistance, applicants with certified organic operations must submit a copy of their current Organic System Plan (OSP). NRCS will use the OSP at the field office level as the basis of the EQIP Plan of Operations and to verify compliance with provisions of the statute. The applicant must also provide the name and contact information of the USDA accredited certifying agent who certified the organic operation. Applicants who fail to provide NRCS with a copy of the OSP or the certifying agent contact information are not eligible to obtain EQIP Organic Initiative assistance; the application will be deferred until the required information has been provided. Confidential and private information provided by program applicants must be protected.
- Certified Organic Producers – Compliance — The statute requires organic producers to develop and carry out an OSP in order to obtain EQIP Organic Initiative benefits. NRCS is responsible for verifying that certified organic EQIP participants are complying with this statutory requirement and will accomplish this verification as follows:
  1. Contract Review — NRCS will annually complete a contract review in accordance with the requirements of Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 512, Subpart F. NRCS will review the EQIP Plan of Operations to ensure the participant is implementing practices on schedule and to verify that practices implemented are consistent with the statute and OSP.
  2. Organic Certification Status — For active certified organic EQIP contracts, NRCS will annually (during contract reviews) verify that the participant's operation has maintained the status of a certified operation. NRCS-designated conservationists will determine whether the participant and operation are certified by accessing the AMS Web site at: [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/) (click on the link for "List of Accredited Certifying Agents." After selecting a State, links to "Lists of Certified Operations" can be found under the name of certifying agents).

- Certified Organic Producers – Violations — The statute requires EQIP organic participants to implement practices that are included in or are consistent with an OSP. Program participants who NRCS determines to be in violation of the terms of the EQIP contract agreement may be subject to contract termination and potentially responsible for repayment and assessment of liquidated damages, in accordance with program policy. Violations may include: not implementing agreed-to practices according to schedule in the EQIP Plan of Operations, not in compliance with an OSP, no longer meeting AMS certification, or a combination of these. The statute requirements for termination only apply to the single organic contract in violation, and termination procedures will not be applied to other program contracts unless they are also in violation. See existing program policy (440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart F, “Contract Administration”) for guidance related to contract review and program participants who violate terms of the contract agreement.

**Contact.** If you have questions, contact Abby Letzter, Conservation Programs Specialist, at (202) 720-6268 or email [abigail.letzter@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:abigail.letzter@wdc.usda.gov); or Mark Parson, EQIP specialist, at (202) 720-1840 or email [mark.parson@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:mark.parson@wdc.usda.gov).



Dave White  
Chief

#### Attachments

- A. Screening Criteria Worksheet – Transition to Organic Production
- B. Screening Criteria Worksheet – “Certified” Organic Operation
- C. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Fiscal Year 2010
- D. Guidance for Selection of Conservation Practices to Support Organic Operations
- E. Guidance for Adding Organic Scenario Payment Rates in FY 2010 Payment Schedules
- F. Producer Self-Certification Template: Organic During Transition

**Attachment A:**

**NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Organic Initiative  
NATIONAL SCREENING CRITERIA WORKSHEET – Fiscal Year 2010  
EQIP Application Supporting “Transition to Organic Production”**

*A Screening Worksheet is required to be completed for each eligible EQIP application.*

Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP organic-initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, cutoff dates are established for purposes of ranking and funding allocation. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are efficiently allocated to address priority conservation needs related to organic provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits or approval of an EQIP contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and the screening priority (High, Medium, and Low) must be recorded in ProTracts. Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant. If the applicant is already certified organic, do not use this worksheet, use the “Certified” screening worksheet to determine priority.

**Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for each eligible EQIP Applicant**

Applicant Name:		County:	
Application Number:		Field Office:	
Evaluator Name:		Date:	

**Instructions:** For each eligible application submitted by March 12, 2010, complete the following worksheet. Applications submitted after this date must be “deferred” until the next funding cycle. Use of this screening tool is mandatory and completed prior to final ranking.

<b>Step One – Basic Eligibility:</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>A</b>	Is the application NRCS-CPA-1200 complete, signed and dated?		Yes, Continue to B		No, do not process until application is complete.
<b>B</b>	Do the EQIP planned practices address one or more of the national program priorities in ProTracts? The application must support at least one national program priority.		Yes, Continue to C		No, application is ineligible
<b>C</b>	Is the land eligible? (EQIP 515.52 and CPM 512.22): Applicant has provided documentation and evidence to indicate land meets program eligibility requirements and proof of control.		Yes, Continue to D		No, application is ineligible
<b>D</b>	Applicant has provided written self-certification agreeing to develop an Organic System Plan (OSP), has provided evidence of contact with an AMS certified agent, and agrees to implement conservation practices consistent with EQIP statute. (Sec. 1240(B))		Yes, Continue to Step 2		No, application is ineligible

**Step Two – Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:**

<p><b>High Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of at least five State-approved conservation practices.                      OR                      -Application will result in implementation of a State-approved suite of three or more organic conservation practices.                      (A suite of organic practices approved in any State will tie practices together to address resource concerns)                      OR                      -Application is for development of an EQIP Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) Supporting Organic Transition.</p>	<b>High Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p><b>Medium Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of at least two State-approved organic conservation practices.</p>	<b>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p><b>Low Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of only one State-approved organic conservation practice.</p>	<b>Low Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p>Application is for conservation practices that do not assist the producer’s transition to an organic production system, are not consistent with requirements of an OSP, or both. Defer application (or refer application to other program).</p>	<b>Defer</b>

The priority determination of High, Medium or Low must be recorded in ProTracts for this applicant.

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
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**Attachment B:**

**NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Organic Initiative  
NATIONAL SCREENING CRITERIA WORKSHEET – Fiscal Year 2010  
EQIP Application for “Certified” Organic Operation**

*A Screening Worksheet is required to be completed for each eligible EQIP application.*

Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP organic-initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, cutoff dates are established for purposes of ranking and funding allocation. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are efficiently allocated to address priority conservation needs related to organic provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits or approval of an EQIP contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and the screening priority (High, Medium, and Low) must be recorded in ProTracts. Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant. If the applicant operation is not “certified organic” do not use this worksheet, use the “Transition to Organic Production” screening worksheet.

**Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for each eligible EQIP Applicant**

Applicant Name:		County:	
Application Number:		Field Office:	
Evaluator Name:		Date:	

**Instructions:** For each eligible application submitted by March 12, 2010, complete the following worksheet. Applications submitted after this date must be deferred until the next funding cycle. Use of this screening tool is **mandatory** and completed prior to final ranking.

<b>Step One – Basic Eligibility:</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>A</b>	Is the application NRCS-CPA-1200 complete, signed and dated?		Yes, Continue to B		No, do not process until application is complete.
<b>B</b>	Do the EQIP planned practices address one or more of the national program priorities in ProTracts? The application must support at least one national program priority.		Yes, Continue to C		No, application is ineligible
<b>C</b>	Is the land eligible? (EQIP 515.52 and CPM 512.22): Applicant has provided documentation and evidence to indicate land meets program eligibility requirements and proof of control.		Yes, Continue to D		No, application is ineligible
<b>D</b>	Applicant has provided NRCS with a copy of their current approved Organic System Plan (OSP) and agrees to implement conservation practices consistent with EQIP statute and the OSP. (Sec. 1240(B))		Yes, Continue to Step 2		No, application is ineligible

**Step Two – Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:**

<p><b>High Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of at least five State-approved conservation practices.                      OR                      -Application will result in implementation of a State-approved suite of three or more organic conservation practices.                      (A suite of organic practices approved in any State will tie practices together to address resource concerns)                      OR                      -Application is for development of an EQIP Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) Supporting Organic Transition.</p>	<b>High Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p><b>Medium Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of at least two State-approved organic conservation practices.</p>	<b>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p><b>Low Priority Category:</b>                      -Application will result in implementation of only one State-approved organic conservation practice.</p>	<b>Low Priority Status in ProTracts</b>
<p>Application is for conservation practices that do not help producer maintain or implement conservation practices documented in an Organic System Plan. Defer application (or refer application to other program).</p>	<b>Defer</b>

The priority determination of High, Medium or Low must be recorded in ProTracts for this applicant.

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
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NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Organic Initiative – FY 2010

**Attachment C:**

**NRCS NATIONAL ORGANIC INITIATIVE PROTRACTS SUPPORT  
Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Fiscal Year 2010  
(To be entered into each State ProTracts AERT ranking tool to support the Organic Initiative)**

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**Resource concern categories allowed for FY 2010 AERT for the Organic Initiative:**

- Soil Condition
- Soil Erosion
- Domestic Animals
- Plant Condition
- Water Quality
- Fish and Wildlife

Note: *Water Quantity* and *Air Quality* resource concerns may not be used to address NOP quality standards. Do not check the boxes in AERT for the organic ranking system for these two resource concerns.

**NRCS Contracting Policy – EQIP Application Evaluation**

**512.25 Evaluating Applications**

A. Use of AERT

(1) All eligible AMA, EQIP, and WHIP applications received within the designated ranking period (see Section 512.24, "Processing Applications") and applications deferred from a previous year (Section 512.27, "Servicing Unfunded Applications") will be evaluated using AERT with criteria developed for each program, as described in the applicable part of the CPM. The AERT is accessed through ProTracts and directly integrated with Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) and Practice Average Cost in SmarTech. The Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) application is also coupled with these applications.

(2) National, State, and local questions are required in all ranking tools and messages in AERT will indicate at "release" if not in place. States are required to distribute 25 percent of the total ranking points to national questions. The remaining 75 percent will be divided with 10 percent to the efficiency score, at least 25 percent to local questions, and the balance to State questions.

**National Issues Priority Questions:**

National program questions for the EQIP Organic Initiative are already loaded into the FY 2010 ProTracts AERT ranking tool along with assigned points. No modification of these questions or points is allowed. States need to provide guidance to field staff that the following national questions are not related to the organic initiative and therefore should not be selected for points during the ranking process:

- 2a, 2b, 2c (Water-conservation-related resource concern questions) = 0 points
- 3a, 3b, 3c (Air-quality-related resource concerns) = 0 points

**Statewide and Local Issues Ranking Criteria Questions:**

To be entered under the "State Issues" or "Local Issues" ProTracts AERT system for organic subaccount funding pools. Questions may be distributed between State issues and local issues in AERT as needed to facilitate point distribution. States may add additional State- or local-level ranking questions if directly related to addressing identified resource concerns for organic production systems as approved by the Deputy Chief for Financial Assistance and Community Development (FACD). New questions must be submitted to the Deputy Chief for FACD within 15 calendar days of receipt of this bulletin to allow adequate time for posting of organic program announcements and information to State Web sites. States are responsible for entering and distributing points for questions in accordance with previously issued national guidance for program consistency, as noted in the contract policy above.

## **NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Organic Initiative – FY 2010**

### **Attachment C:**

#### Subheading 1: Practice Implementation to Support Organic:

- 1-1. EQIP plan schedule of operations provides for implementation of all funded practices within 2 years or less.
- 1-2. EQIP plan schedule of operations provides for implementation of all funded practices within 3 years or less.

#### Subheading 2: Soil Resource Issues:

- 2-1. EQIP plan includes implementation of two or more soil building/enhancing practices that address soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, etc., to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 2-2. EQIP plan includes implementation of one soil building/enhancing practice that addresses soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, etc., to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 2-3. Soil Condition: EQIP plan includes implementation of practice 590 Nutrient Management to FOTG quality criteria for management of soil fertility, plant nutrients, and soil amendments.

#### Subheading 3: Soil Erosion Resource Issues:

- 3-1. EQIP plan includes practices that will result in measurable reduction of erosion from all sources **or** participant has already addressed all erosion problems to FOTG quality criteria standards..

#### Subheading 4: Water Quality Resource Issues:

- 4-1. EQIP plan includes practices that will result in reduction of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, pesticides, and sediment, leaving the treatment unit to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 4-2. EQIP plan includes practices that will manage excess surface water discharge from the treatment unit to an impaired water body (e.g., EPA 303d list, etc.) to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 4-3. EQIP plan includes implementation of practice 595 Pest Management and an IPM plan to FOTG quality criteria for management of pests and noxious and invasive species to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 4-4. EQIP plan includes implementation of practice 633 Waste Utilization to manage domestic livestock manure to FOTG quality criteria standards to protect surface and groundwater resources.

#### Subheading 6: Plant Condition Resource Issues:

- 6-1. Plant Condition: EQIP plan includes practices that will result in management of vegetation and surface residues to FOTG quality criteria standards.

#### Subheading 7: Domestic Animal Resource Issues:

- 7-1. EQIP plan includes implementation of practice 511 Forage Harvest Management to address NOP requirements for management of feed supplements and forage supplies.
- 7-2. EQIP plan includes implementation of practice 528 Prescribed Grazing to FOTG quality criteria standards for management of plant species, livestock, residues, feed, and other identified resource needs.
- 7-3. EQIP plan includes implementation of practices that limit and manage domestic livestock access to streams, creeks, and other natural water bodies to FOTG quality criteria standards.
- 7-4. EQIP plan includes implementation of practices to assure adequate clean off-stream domestic livestock drinking water sources are available in the treatment unit and meets FOTG quality criteria standards.

#### Subheading 8: Fish and Wildlife Resource Issues:

- 8-1. EQIP plan includes implementation of practices that include pollinator-friendly plant species in the crop rotation system.
  - 8-2. EQIP plan includes implementation of conservation practices that include pollinator plant species for organic production systems (e.g., filter and buffer strips, hedge rows, windbreaks, etc.).
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Attachment D Guidance for Selection of Conservation Practices to Support Organic Operations

NOP Rule	National Organic Program (NOP) Requirement	NRCS Resource Concern Category	Sub Resource Concern	NRCS Practices to Consider	Definition, Purposes and Guidance Specific to Organic Operations	Payment Schedule Considerations
205.202	<p><b>Land Requirements:</b> (c) Have distinct, defined boundaries and buffer zones such as runoff diversions to prevent the unintended application of a prohibited substance to the crop or contact with a prohibited substance applied to adjoining land that is not under organic management.</p>	Plant Condition	*Productivity, Health, and Vigor	<p>327 Conservation cover, 386 Field Borders, 393 Filter Strips, 422 Hedgerow Planting, 391 Riparian Forest Buffer, 390 Riparian Herbaceous Buffer, 380 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Establishment, 650 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Renovation</p>	Establish physical barriers and increase distances between organic and nonorganic crops to protect against airborne or surface contamination by prohibited substances or other nonorganic operations.	Consider increased cost associated with planting material, such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc., which may need to be certified for use with an organic operation.
205.203	<p><b>Soil fertility and crop nutrient management standard:</b> (a) The producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion.</p>	Soil Erosion	<p>*Sheet and Rill Erosion, *Gully Erosion, *Wind Erosion</p>	<p>327 Conservation Cover, 328 Conservation Crop Rotation, 332 Contour Buffer Strip, 330 Contour Farming, 331 Contour Orchards and other Fruit Areas, 340 Cover Crop, 342 Critical Area Planting, 588 Cross Wind Ridges, 589 Cross Wind Trap Strips, 386 Field Border, 393 Filter Strip, 410 Grade Stabilization Structure, 412 Grassed Waterway, 603 Herbaceous wind Barriers, 345 Residue and Tillage Management - Mulch Till, 329 Residue and Tillage Management - No Till, 346 Residue and Tillage Management - Ridge Till, 344 Residue and Tillage Management - Seasonal, 557 Row Arrangement, 585 Strip Cropping, 609 Surface Roughening, 600 Terrace, 601 Vegetation Barriers, 638 Water and Sediment Control Basin, 380 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Establishment, 650 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Renovation</p>	Develop a system of conservation practices and management to address wind erosion as well as sheet, rill, and gully erosion. Keep wind erosion below crop tolerance and/or soil loss tolerance. Keep sheet and rill erosion at or below the tolerable soil loss. Stabilize all gullies (temporary and permanent).	Include estimated incurred costs associated with implementation of this practice such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc. Consider increased cost associated with planting material that may need to be certified for use with an organic operation. Consider Forgone Income (FI) cost category for land taken out of production tied to average yield loss. If cover crop is not replacing a production crop, FI is not applicable.

Attachment D Guidance for Selection of Conservation Practices to Support Organic Operations

NOP Rule	National Organic Program (NOP) Requirement	NRCS Resource Concern Category	Sub Resource Concern	NRCS Practices to Consider	Definition, Purposes and Guidance Specific to Organic Operations	Payment Schedule Considerations
205.203	<p>Soil fertility and crop nutrient management standard:                      (b) The producer must manage crop nutrients and soil fertility through rotations, cover crops, and the application of plant and animal materials;                      (c) The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.</p>	Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater</li> <li>*Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water</li> <li>*Excessive Salinity in Groundwater</li> <li>*Excessive Salinity in Surface Water</li> <li>*Turbidity in Surface Water</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Groundwater</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water</li> </ul>	<p>328 Conservation Crop Rotation,                      340 Cover Crops,                      393 Filter Strips,                      590 Nutrient Management</p>	<p>Establish a crop rotation that recycles nutrients and/or produces nitrogen. Implement a nutrient management system that address crop nutrient needs by applying the right source, at the right time, at the right rate, and the right placement within NOP Rules.</p>	<p>Include estimated incurred costs associated with implementation of this practice such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc. Consider increased cost associated with planting material that may need to be certified for use with an organic operation. Consider Forgone Income cost category for land taken out of production tied to average yield loss. If cover crop is not replacing a production crop, FI is not applicable.</p>
205.204	<p>Seeds and planting stock practice standard.                      (a) The producer must use organically grown seeds, annual seedlings, and planting stock.</p>	Plant Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Plants not adapted or suited</li> <li>*Productivity, Health, and Vigor</li> </ul>	<p>The NRCS EQIP program does not support practices or activities for the planting or establishment of production crops:                      515.81 Eligible Conservation Practices                      B. Ineligible Practices. Ineligible conservation practices are those:                      (i) Where the sole purpose is to enhance production without an identifiable conservation benefit or natural resource concern.                       EQIP program does support use of approved planting material to support NRCS approved vegetative conservation practices. For these scenarios, NRCS practice design and plant/seed selections must also conform to NOP requirements for use of organically grown seeds, seedlings and planting materials.</p>	<p>All seeding practices need to support alternatives and practice design for organically approved seed and planting stock. See also exceptions to NOP rule per 205.204(a).</p>	<p>Consider increased cost associated with planting material, such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc., which may need to be certified for use with an organic operation.</p>

Attachment D Guidance for Selection of Conservation Practices to Support Organic Operations

NOP Rule	<u>National Organic Program (NOP) Requirement</u>	NRCS Resource Concern Category	Sub Resource Concern	NRCS Practices to Consider	Definition, Purposes and Guidance Specific to Organic Operations	Payment Schedule Considerations
205.205	<p><b>Crop rotation practice standard.</b> The producer must implement a crop rotation including but not limited to sod, cover crops, green manure crops, and catch crops that provide the following functions that are applicable to the operation:</p> <p>(a) Maintain or improve soil organic matter content; (b) Provide for pest management in annual and perennial crops; (c) Manage deficient or excess plant nutrients; and (d) Provide erosion control.</p>	<p>Soil erosion Soil condition Water Quality</p>	<p><u>Soil Erosion:</u> *Ephemeral Gully *Irrigation Induced *Sheet and Rill *Wind <u>Soil Condition:</u> *Compaction *Damage from Sediment Deposition *Organic Matter Depletion <u>Water Quality:</u> *Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater *Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water *Excessive Salinity in Groundwater *Excessive Salinity in Surface Water *Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water *Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water</p>	<p>328 Conservation Crop rotation, 340 Cover Crops, 590 Nutrient Management, 595 Integrated Pest Management.</p>	<p>Offer alternatives which include a suite of conservation practices needed to maintain or increase soil organic matter, manage nutrients, reduce erosion, and mitigate pest pressures.</p>	<p>Consider cost associated with acquisition of technical knowledge, which may need to be certified for use with an organic operation. Also consideration should be given for additional cost of using nonconventional methods of pest management.</p>
205.206	<p><b>Crop pest, weed, and disease management practice standard.</b> (a) The producer must use management practices to prevent crop pests, weeds, and diseases (b) Pest problems may be controlled through mechanical or physical methods per NOP rules.</p>	<p>Plant Condition</p>	<p>*Plants not adapted or suited *Productivity, Health, and Vigor *Noxious and Invasive Plants</p>	<p>328 Conservation Crop rotation, 340 Cover Crops, 595 Integrated Pest Management.</p>	<p>Implement a system of practices to mitigate pest pressures.</p>	<p>Consideration should be given for additional cost of using nonconventional methods of pest management.</p>

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	<b>B. FOREST LAND</b>					
205.202	<p><b>Land Requirements:</b>                      (c) Have distinct, defined boundaries and buffer zones such as runoff diversions to prevent the unintended application of a prohibited substance to the crop or contact with a prohibited substance applied to adjoining land that is not under organic management.</p>	Plant Condition	*Productivity, Health, and Vigor	394 Firebreak, 391 Riparian Forest Buffer, 390 Riparian Herbaceous Buffer, 422 Hedgerow Planting, 380 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Establishment, 650 Windbreak and Shelterbelt Renovation	Establish physical barriers and increase distances between organic and nonorganic crops to protect against airborne or surface contamination by prohibited substances or other nonorganic operations.	Consider increased cost associated with planting material, such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc., which may need to be certified for use with an organic operation.
205.203	<p><b>Soil fertility and crop nutrient management standard:</b>                      (a) The producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion.</p>	Soil Erosion	*Sheet and Rill Erosion, *Gully Erosion, *Wind Erosion	342 Critical Area Planting, 383 Fuel Break, 384 Forest Slash Treatment, 379 Multi Story Cropping, 394 Firebreak, 393 Filter Strip, 410 Grade Stabilization Structure, 490 Tree/Shrub Site Preparation, 654 Road-Trail-Landing Closure 638 Water and Sediment Control Basin, 655 Forest Trails and Landings, 666 Forest Stand Improvement,	Develop a system of conservation practices and management to address wind erosion as well as sheet, rill, and gully erosion. Keep wind erosion below crop tolerance and/or soil loss tolerance. Keep sheet and rill erosion at or below the tolerable soil loss. Stabilize all gullies (temporary and permanent).	Include estimated incurred costs associated with implementation of this practice such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc. Consider increased cost associated with planting material that may need to be certified for use with an organic operation. Consider Forgone Income cost category for land taken out of production tied to average yield loss. If cover crop is not replacing a production crop, FI is not applicable.

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205.203	<p><b>Soil fertility and crop nutrient management standard:</b>                      (b) The producer must manage crop nutrients and soil fertility through rotations, cover crops, and the application of plant and animal materials;                      (c) The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.</p>	Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater</li> <li>*Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water</li> <li>*Excessive Salinity in Groundwater</li> <li>*Excessive Salinity in Surface Water</li> <li>*Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Groundwater</li> <li>*Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water</li> </ul>	<p>393 Filter Strips,                      384 Forest Slash Treatment,                      379 Multi Story Cropping,                      381 Silvopasture Establishment,                      391 Riparian Forest Buffer,                      590 Nutrient Management,                      612 Tree/Shrub Establishment,</p>	<p>Establish a crop rotation that recycles nutrients and/or produces nitrogen. Implement a nutrient management system that address crop nutrient needs by applying the right source, at the right time, at the right rate, and the right placement within NOP Rules.</p>	<p>Include estimated incurred costs associated with implementation of this practice such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc. Consider increased cost associated with planting material that may need to be certified for use with an organic operation. Consider Forgone Income cost category for land taken out of production tied to average yield loss. If cover crop is not replacing a production crop, FI is not applicable.</p>
205.204	<p><b>Seeds and planting stock practice standard.</b>                      (a) The producer must use organically grown seeds, annual seedlings, and planting stock.</p>	Plant Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Plants not adapted or suited</li> <li>*Productivity, Health, and Vigor</li> </ul>	<p>The NRCS EQIP program does not support practices or activities for the planting or establishment of production crops:                      515.81 Eligible Conservation Practices                      B. Ineligible Practices. Ineligible conservation practices are those:                      (i) Where the sole purpose is to enhance production without an identifiable conservation benefit or natural resource concern.                      EQIP program does support use of approved planting material to support NRCS approved vegetative conservation practices. For these scenarios, NRCS practice design and plant/seed selections must also conform to NOP requirements for use of organically grown seeds, seedlings and planting materials.</p>	<p>All seeding practices need to support alternatives and practice design for organically approved seed and planting stock. See also exceptions to NOP rule per 205.204(a).</p>	<p>Consider increased cost associated with planting material, such as seed, fertilizer, amendments, etc., which may need to be certified for use with an organic operation.</p>