



Fact Sheet

February 2004

Farm Bill 2002

Environmental Quality Incentives Program in Nevada

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides assistance to agricultural producers 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. EQIP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). Funding for EQIP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

How EQIP Works Nevada

The objective of EQIP in Nevada is to optimize environmental benefits on agricultural land in Nevada. Eligible land in Nevada is defined as cropland, hayland, rangeland, grassland, pasture land, private non-industrial forestland, and other lands that poses a serious threat to soil, air, water, or related resources. In addition, the land must meet Nevada's definition of an irrigated crop (annually tilled crop, alfalfa); other multi-year grasses and legumes in rotation, orchards, or vineyards; native hay or pasture which is **currently** being grown following locally accepted cultural and management practices, or land on which livestock is **currently** being produced and the production involves the growing or raising of crops for human consumption; or for growing, raising, breeding, or reproduction of livestock which will be used for food or fiber (livestock products).

In order for irrigated land to be eligible for the program, it must be irrigated 2 out of the last 5 years.

Nevada has established both statewide and local priorities for funding purposes. The following national concerns will be addressed statewide in Nevada:

- Animal feeding operations/Confined feeding operations (AFO/CAFO), and
- Conservation of ground and surface water.

AFO/CAFO applications will compete statewide for funding. Cost share assistance will be provided to help producers meet federal and state permitting regulations for CAFO's. NRCS can provide cost-share assistance for practices related to animal waste facilities, waste utilization, manure transfer, and to develop nutrient management plans. NRCS's comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) will satisfy the EPA nutrient management plan (NMP). Manure storage facilities will be required to meet NRCS State technical standards. A minimum cost-share of 50 percent is available.

The purpose of Ground and Surface Water Conservation is to promote water conservation by providing cost-share assistance to agricultural operations to improve irrigation systems, enhance irrigation efficiencies, convert production to less water-intensive agricultural commodities, improve water storage, and mitigate the effects of drought that result in a net savings to the operation. In Nevada, areas affected by reoccurring drought conditions qualify for these funds as well as areas where overdraft of ground water supply is occurring. To be eligible for these funds, an applicant will need to show a high increase in irrigation systems efficiency, agree to develop and implement an irrigation water management plan, and install water measuring devices as part of an EQIP contract.

Applications will be further prioritized for funding assistance based upon meeting the following statewide priorities. In addition, applications will be prioritized based upon the number of resource concerns that are treated to the resource management level (RMS) on an entire tract, farm or conservation management units (CMU's).

Statewide priorities include:

- Air quality pollutants: particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, ozone precursors, and depleters.
- Soil erosion (does not include highly erodible land compliance).
- At-risk species habitat for sage grouse.
- Reduction in non-point source pollutants to meet state 303d listed waters or TMDL requirements where agriculture activities could be contributing source of the listed pollutant.
- Noxious or invasive weeds which are on national or state approved lists.

Once applications have been prioritized for meeting national and statewide priorities, a ranking process will be used to rank applications to meet local priorities and resource concerns. Local program areas include county, multi-county, and watershed groups, and Native American tribes.

More information regarding state and local EQIP implementation can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/EQIP>.

Additional Program Eligibility

Persons interested in entering into a cost-share agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time. To be eligible to participate, applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill;

- Provide the Social Security number of all individuals who will benefit from the assistance; and
- Develop an EQIP plan of operations.
 - If plan includes an animal waste storage or treatment facility, the participant must develop and implement a comprehensive nutrient management plan.
 - Plan serves as the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant and provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that can be up to 10 years in duration.

Total amount of cost-share and incentive payments paid to an individual or entity to an aggregate of \$450,000, directly or indirectly, for all contracts entered into during fiscal years 2002 through 2007.

The Adjusted Gross Income provision of the 2002 Farm Bill applies to eligibility for EQIP and several other 2002 Farm Bill programs.

Individuals or entities that have an average adjusted gross income exceeding \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the year the contract is approved are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments. However, an exemption is provided in cases where 75 percent of the adjusted gross income is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operations. The final rule for this provision has not yet been published.

Practice Payments

Cost-sharing may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices depending upon the funding allocation and national and statewide priorities. The EQIP cost-share rate for limited resource producers and beginning farmers and ranchers has been established at 90 percent in Nevada.

USDA has established a self-determination tool for applicants to determine eligibility as a limited resource producer. The tool can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/smlfarmer/tool.asp>. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a producer to perform land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, irrigation water management, and wildlife habitat management. These payments may be provided for up to three years to encourage producers to carry out management practices that they otherwise might not implement.

How to Apply for EQIP

Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be obtained through USDA's e-gov Web site at: <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>. Enter Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Agency field, Environmental Quality Incentives Program in the Program Name field, and CCC-1200 in the Form Number field. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS. Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. The local decision makers periodically will announce a batching period, after which applications received will be screened and ranked.

For More Information

If you need more information about EQIP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>.



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<http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>