

EQIP Program

1. Introduction to Program: Purpose, Goals and Objectives:

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was re-authorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement conservation practices. Producers who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP activities are carried out according to an environmental quality incentives program plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions. The local conservation district approves the plan.

EQIP may cost-share up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices. Incentive payments may be provided for up to three years to encourage producers to carry out management practices they may not otherwise use without the incentive. However, limited resource producers and beginning farmers and may be eligible for cost-shares up to 90 percent. Farmers may elect to use a certified third-party provider for technical assistance. An individual or entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, cost-share or incentive payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$450,000 for all EQIP contracts entered during the term of the Farm Bill.

EQIP program information, including forms, final rule, publications, etc., regarding the National EQIP Program can be accessed at the following web site:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/> Additional information on EQIP can be found in the Conservation Programs Manual, 440-V-CPM, First Edition, Part 515.

2. Fact sheets:

The following documents are attached:

Farm Bill 2002 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Fact Sheet

3. Application process: Step-by-step with timeframes for actions

The following provides a general account of the steps necessary for a landowner to complete the EQIP Application process.

1. Announce application evaluation periods. Application is ongoing.
2. Producer signs CCC-1200 (EQIP Application) and CCC-1200 Appendix.

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3. Inform producers of \$450,000 payment limitation for individuals and entities effective for all contracts FY 2002 - FY 2007.
4. Rank all CCC-1200's accordingly.
5. Determine which applications will rank High-High.
6. Complete conservation planning on all applications that rank High-High.
7. Forward all High-High applications to the Programs Staff at the State Office. A date will be announced to forward all High-High Applications to the State Office. **Note: There will be dates set at a later time for applications that rank lower than High-High. Example: High-Medium**
8. Review the state application approval list sent from the State Office Program Staff. **Note: This list will be e-mailed to all NRCS and FSA employees.**
9. Sign and mail Contract approval letters to all producers that were approved for funding in your county.
10. Develop conservation plan and contract support document in Customer Service Toolkit for all approved applications in your county within 5 days of being notified of application approval.
11. Before approving the EQIP contract, check with your local FSA office to ensure correct unobligated funds are available.
12. Approve EQIP contract by obtaining signatures of the producer and the designated conservationist.
13. Provide a copy of the approved Contract Support Document to your local FSA office so they can obligate the appropriate funds for the EQIP contract Sign into their System 386.
14. Sign and mail to producers in your county the following letters as appropriate:
 - Application deferred (**Completed once all funds have been obligated. The State office will notify all offices of this information.**)
 - Application disapproved (**Completed at the end of the Fiscal Year**)
15. Accept, review, and verify receipts for performed practices.
16. Obtain producer certification on CCC-1245.

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17. Designated Conservationist must sign the CCC-1245, block 25 authorizing disbursement of payment and provide a copy to FSA to issue payment.

- **Note: Only employees designated as authorized to sign on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation and whose original signature has been provided to county FSA office shall sign CCC- 1245's.**

4. Forms Required:

All of the following forms are attached:

CCC-1200, Conservation Program Contract

CCC-1200, Appendix To Form CCC-1200

CCC-1201, Application Evaluation Worksheet

CCC-1245, Practice Approval and Payment Application

Sample Conservation Plan developed in Customer Service Toolkit

Sample Contract Support Document developed in Customer Service Toolkit

5. Indiana contact information:

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