

Arizona Farm Bill Programs

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Farm Bill

Specialist

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- 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.
- Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process.

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- Persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production are eligible for the program.
- Persons interested in entering into a contractual agreement with USDA-NRCS for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time.

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- *Land Eligibility:*

Eligible lands are lands on which agricultural commodities or livestock are produced. This includes:

- • Cropland;
- • Rangeland;
- • Grassland;

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- ● Pasture land;
- ● Private, non-industrial forestland: and
- ● Other land determined to pose a serious threat to soil, air, water, or related resources

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To be eligible to participate, applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer; (there must be an annual minimum of \$1,000 of agricultural products produced and/or sold from the operation)
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill;

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- Have an interest in the farming operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment in EQIP.
- Have control of the land for the term of the contract.
- Have an irrigation history 2 of the last 5 years prior to applying for EQIP.

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- The Adjusted Gross Income (AGI): for Individuals or entities that have an average AGI greater than \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the years the contract is approved are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments.
- Exception: An exemption is provided that 75% of AGI comes from farming, ranching or forestry operations.

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- A \$450,000 cap was established for each EQIP contract.
- Irrigated cropland must have been irrigated two of the last five years to be eligible for cost sharing on irrigation practices.

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To be eligible to participate, applicants must:

Develop an EQIP plan of operations, including:

- The participant's specific conservation and environmental objectives to be achieved;

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Develop an EQIP plan of operations, including:

- One or more conservation practices to be implemented to achieve the conservation and environmental objectives; and
- The schedule for implementing the conservation practices.

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NRCS works with the participant to develop the EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides payments to landowners under these agreements that can be up to 10 years in duration.

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- EQIP is a competitive program. Applicants conservation plans are ranked to establish which applications will achieve the highest environmental benefits and be selected for contract development.

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- Ranking
- How are applications ranked?

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- **Guidelines for Ranking Applicants**
 - What practices can be contracted, and when are environmental benefit points awarded?
- When both of the following apply:
 - 1. A resource problem exists that does not meet Arizona NRCS Quality Criteria (minimum standard to meet the resource concern threshold level).

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- **Guidelines for Ranking Applicants**
 - 2. One or more new conservation practices must be applied to address the resource problem to achieve quality criteria as identified in the Field Office Technical Guide. All new conservation practices that are required to achieve quality criteria for the resource problem must be included in the contract, and must be cost shared.

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■ Guidelines for Ranking Applicants

- New conservation practices include significantly modified management practices, and replacement of structural practices that have exceeded their expected life span
- Work that is considered maintenance of a previously installed conservation practice cannot be included in an EQIP contract

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- NRCS-CPA 1200 “Conservation Program Application”
- NRCS-CPA-1202 “Conservation Program Contract”
- NRCS-CPA-1202 “Appendix”
- CCC 526 “Adjusted Gross Income Certification”
- SF-1199A – the “Direct Deposit Sign-Up form”
- CCC 501A – Member’s Information (for entity and joint operations only)
- AD-1026 the “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification”

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- Arizona NRCS Website:
<http://www.az.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>
- Final EQIP rule can be found at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>

Thanks

