

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Conservation Incentive Contracts



Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that offers farmers, ranchers, and nonindustrial private forest landowners financial and technical assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices and activities on working agricultural and forestry landscapes.

What Are EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts?

Incentive contracts are an option available through EQIP that offers producers financial assistance to adopt conservation management practices on working landscapes. Producers may use incentive contracts as a “steppingstone” from correcting resource issues on specific land units through EQIP to achieving sustainable stewardship on their entire operation.

Conservation Incentive Contracts are available nationwide and help producers address priority resource concerns, like sequestering carbon and improving water quality in high-priority areas.

Incentive contracts now offers new conservation evaluation and monitoring activities (CEMA) to help report outcomes of practices.

Key Incentive Contract Features

Incentive contracts:

- Require producers to address at least one priority resource concern during the contract period.
- Have an initial length of five years.
- Have a payment limitation of \$200,000 for the life of the 2018 Farm Bill which expires in 2023.

Other details include:

- Offers two types of payments:
 - Implementation payments, which are paid after certification of practice.
 - Annual payments, which include management practices that will serve as annual payments and are paid as soon as practicable, after October 1 of each fiscal year.
- NRCS offers higher payment rates and advance payments to historically underserved (HU) producers who implement conservation practices in an EQIP Conservation Incentive Contract. HU producers include Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, and Veterans.

Who Is Eligible?

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who own or lease agricultural land may be eligible. EQIP assistance can be used on many types of operations, including, but not limited to:

- Conventional and organic
- Specialty crops and commodity crops
- Forestry and wildlife
- Livestock operations

Get Started with USDA

USDA provides technical assistance at no cost to agricultural and forestry producers from more than 2,300 USDA Service Centers across the nation. Our Service Centers are currently open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. Visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find the contact information for your local FSA or NRCS office. [Check the status of your local USDA Service Center](#), then make an appointment to determine next steps for your conservation goals.

Visit NRCS [programs web page](#) to learn more about USDA’s financial and technical conservation assistance.

How to Apply

NRCS accepts applications for EQIP year-round, however producers and landowners should apply by [state-specific, signup dates](#) to be considered for each year’s funding. To apply, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).



FY2024 EQIP-CIC Eligible Practices

CODE	ASSET	UNITS	LIFESPAN
216	Soil Health Testing	No	1
217	Soil and Source Testing For Nutrient Management	No	1
218	Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment	No	1
3 3 8	Prescribed Burning	Ac	1
528	Prescribed Grazing	Ac	1
590	Nutrient Management	Ac	1
610	Salinity and Sodic Soil Management	Ac	1
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	Ac	1
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	Ac	1
647	Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt	Ac	1

ND will be focusing the 2024 EQIP-CIC sign-up based on three Priority Resource Concerns of Soil Quality, Degraded Plant Condition and Livestock Production Limitation.

A new feature to the ND EQIP-CIC for 2024 is that it is offering implementation of water developments on cropland with the required incorporation of cover crops or annual forages, 2 years out of a 5 year contract, to provide soil health benefits. In order to be eligible for water developments on cropland, producers must also include a prescribed grazing system on the cropland. For all program requirements, contact your local NRCS field office.

Although the program is limited to the practices listed above, participants may include other practices necessary to support implementation of the eligible practices.

All applications must be turned in to field offices by March 1, 2024 to be considered for funding in 2024.

