

NEWS RELEASE

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Season Tunnel Systems for Crops

Madison, Minnesota, February 9, 2010 - Agricultural producers looking to solve natural resource problems on their farms should apply now for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

A new pilot practice that is available this year under the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative, seasonal tunnels are used to increase the availability of locally grown food produced in a conservation friendly way.

“Potential natural resource benefits from using tunnel structures could include improved plant quality, improved soil quality and improved water quality through methods such as reduced nutrient and pesticide transport,” said Burt Hendrickson, District Conservationist for NRCS, Lac qui Parle County.

NRCS will fund one high tunnel per farm, up to 2,178 square feet in size. The practice must be on existing cropland that has an active crop production history. To be eligible for financial assistance on this practice, a high tunnel kit must be purchased from a commercial manufacturer and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations. These are temporary, seasonal structures (not greenhouses) and are only for use in growing crops. Additional conservation practices for control of water runoff from the tunnels or erosion may also need to be installed.

Completed applications must be received at local NRCS Field Offices throughout Minnesota by February 26th for most producers in order to be considered for this funding period. Organic and transitioning organic agriculture producers have until March 12th to apply.

Participation in EQIP is limited to agricultural producers. Organic producers, limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, and underserved farmers were designated in the 2008 Farm Bill as focused outreach groups and may benefit from EQIP.

To find out more about EQIP in Minnesota, contact your local NRCS field office in Madison, MN located at 122 8th Avenue South, Suite 1 or visit the MN NRCS website: www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov.