

ORGANIC INITIATIVE DEADLINE MAY 29

State Conservationist William Hunt, of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today that nearly \$1.8 million has been provided to Minnesota for a new initiative to encourage the implementation of conservation practices associated with organic agriculture production. Funding for the initiative is being made available as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Nationally, \$50 million has been set aside for organic producers and those transitioning to organic production. Organic producers may also apply for assistance under general EQIP.

"Minnesota has been a leader in the production of organic agricultural products but we have a long way to go to meet the booming demand for organic food. These EQIP funds are just the type of kick-start we need to directly assist emerging organic farmers," said William Hunt, State Conservationist. "Interested producers with environmental problems that they would like to treat should apply at their local NRCS Office," said Hunt.

Under the National Organic Initiative, minimum core conservation practices will be determined by specific resource concerns. Payments may be authorized for these practices including: Conservation Crop Rotation; Cover Crop; Nutrient Management; Pest Management; Prescribed Grazing; and Forage Harvest Management. States may also consider using any appropriate practice that meets the resource concern on a particular operation.

Applications received from organic producers or producers in transition to organic farming will be accepted between May 11 and May 29. Applications will be ranked at that time.

Interested producers should visit their local NRCS office at 122 8th Avenue South in Madison to determine eligibility.