

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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For Immediate Release

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USDA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR IDAHO'S ORGANIC PRODUCERS

April 11, 2011 – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) today announced an additional funding opportunity for certified organic producers and those transitioning to organic production to implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. The cutoff date for this Organic Initiative application period is May 20, 2011.

"This is the second sign-up period for the 2011 fiscal year," said Jeff Burwell, "We hope this additional opportunity will allow more organic producers to get assistance in protecting the natural resources on their land and creating conditions that foster organic production."

While organic farmers are invited to sign up for any and all of the NRCS conservation programs, special funding authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill is set aside just for organic farmers and those transitioning to organic.

The Organic Initiative provides financial and technical assistance for organic growers wanting to implement conservation practices that address resource issues and help them meet National Organic Program requirements.

"Organic farmers can resolve existing environmental problems on their farm by carrying out specific conservation practices," Burwell said.

"NRCS has a variety of conservation practices under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that can help organic producers," said Marlon Winger, NRCS State Agronomist. "For example, planting cover crops to increase nitrogen in the soil or improving plant health through crop rotation or more efficient nutrient management using compost."

"Applicants will need to complete a screening worksheet for either a certified organic operation or transitioning to organic production," Burwell said.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000.

To learn more about the conservation practices, the Organic Initiative or eligibility, contact the NRCS office in your area. Find the one nearest you at <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/> and click the link "Find a Service Center" at the end of the list on the left side.