

## Final Applications for NRCS Organic Initiative Due June 1

U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Eric B. Banks, Salina, reminds potential applicants to contact their local NRCS field office soon to find out if they are eligible for the agency's Organic Initiative. Applications for the final ranking period of 2012 are due at NRCS offices by close of business on June 1, 2012. The NRCS Office Locator is available at <http://go.usa.gov/Uo8>.

"The Organic Initiative offers a great way for NRCS to help organic farmers and ranchers and those transitioning to organic farming implement conservation practices on their lands," said Banks. "NRCS employees will assist producers in designing a conservation plan that will work best for their operation."

"As organic production continues to grow in Kansas," said Banks, "NRCS wants to partner with eligible producers to help provide them with the tools they need to be successful organic farmers and ranchers."

"The Organic Initiative also helps address the unique circumstances and concerns of socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers, who have natural resource concerns on their land that need attention," said Banks. "Qualifying Kansas socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers receive higher payment rates."

Nationwide, NRCS has nearly \$50 million in financial and technical assistance available to certified organic producers, those who want to make the transition to organic production and producers who sell less than \$5,000 in organic products annually.

Part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Organic Initiative offers a wide array of conservation practices specifically designed for organic production. The top six Organic Initiative conservation practices are cover crops, nutrient and pest management, seasonal high tunnels, crop rotation, and fencing.

Changes for the 2012 signups include--

- three ranking periods for current and transitioning producers,
- a threshold ranking score that can speed up approval for qualified applicants,
- conservation practices are required that promote the consistent use of those practices, and
- an expanded list of conservation activity plans.

Learn more about the Organic Initiative at <http://go.usa.gov/Uo9> and find out about other NRCS initiatives and programs at <http://go.usa.gov/UoX>.

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