The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related natural resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. EQIP may also help producers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

**Who Can Apply**

Owners of land in agricultural or forest production or persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural or forest production on eligible land and that have a natural resource concern on that land may apply to participate in EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands.

**How EQIP Works**

**Financial Assistance Payments Are Made On Completed Practices**

Financial assistance payments through EQIP are made to eligible producers, to implement approved conservation practices on eligible land or to help producers develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) to address specific land use issues.
Payments are made on completed practices or activities identified in an EQIP contract that meet NRCS standards. Payment rates are set each fiscal year and are attached to the EQIP contract when it is approved.  Payment rates for each conservation practice can be found at each NRCS State Programs website.

**These programs offer financial and technical assistance to help eligible agricultural producers:**

* Construct or improve water management or irrigation structures (Agricultural Management Assistance -  [AMA](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/ama/?cid=stelprdb1042016))
* Improve resource conditions such as soil quality,  water quality, water quantity, air quality, habitat quality, and energy (Conservation Stewardship Program -  [CSP](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/csp/?cid=nrcs143_008316))
* Implement conservation practices, or activities, such as conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land (Environmental Quality Incentives Program - [EQIP](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=stelprdb1044009))

In specific States and locations, funding may also be available for priority issues such as air quality, agricultural energy management plans, seasonal high tunnels and organic operations may be available during fiscal year 2014.  Visit [your State's EQIP page](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcs143_008223) for more information.

**Easements**

These programs are available to eligible landowners to conserve working agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands and forestlands:

* Protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land, or wetlands and their benefits, through Agricultural Land Easements or Wetland Reserve Easements (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program -  [ACEP](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695))
* Help landowners restore, enhance and protect forestland resources on private lands and and promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species  (Healthy Forest Reserve Program - [HFRP](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/forests/?cid=nrcs143_008387))

**EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants**

The [CIG](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=nrcs143_008205) awards competitive grants that stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands.

**Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS​) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's principal agency for providing conservation technical assistance to private landowners, conservation districts, tribes, and other organizations. NRCS delivers conservation technical assistance through its voluntary Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA).  CTA is available to any group or individual interested in conserving our natural resources and sustaining agricultural production in this country. The CTA program functions through a national network of locally-based, professional conservationists located in nearly [every county of the United States](http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app).

**What is Conservation Technical Assistance?**

Conservation technical assistance is the help NRCS​ and its partners provide to land users to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources and to help land users make sound natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands.

This assistance can help land users:

* Maintain and improve private lands and their management
* Implement better land management technologies
* Protect and improve water quality and quantity
* Maintain and improve wildlife and fish habitat
* Enhance recreational opportunities on their land
* Maintain and improve the aesthetic character of private land
* Explore opportunities to diversify agricultural operations and
* Develop and apply sustainable agricultural systems

This assistance may be in the form of resource assessment, conservation practice design, resource monitoring, or follow-up of installed practices.

Although the CTA program does not include financial or cost-share assistance, clients may develop conservation plans, which may serve as a springboard for those interested in participating in USDA financial assistance programs. CTA planning can also serve as a door to financial assistance and easement conservation programs provided by other Federal, State, and local programs.

**Who Needs Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)?** NRCS and its partners use the CTA program to provide technical assistance to:

* farmers
* ranchers
* local units of government
* citizen groups
* recreation groups
* Tribal governments
* professional consultants
* State and Federal agencies
* and others interested in conserving natural resources