

EQIP 101:

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.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>

Q. Who will I be working with at Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)?

A. District Conservationist (nickname DC) & Soil Conservationist (nickname Soil Con)



FARMER-TO-FARMER ADVICE:

▶ Work with your local Conservation Districts and your MAEAP Technician to schedule a MAEAP farm visit and create an Action Plan. Tell Conservation District Staff you are applying for EQIP.

▶ Working with a MAEAP Technician is **FREE**, voluntary, and confidential.



Your MAEAP Technician can work with you and your DC to identify environmental risks that may be eligible for costshare under EQIP.



Having an action plan can help improve your ranking on your EQIP application; refer to The MIFFS Farmers' Guide to EQIP.



MICHIGAN FOOD & FARMING SYSTEMS

We are dedicated to supporting the many faces of farming, particularly our beginning and historically underserved farmers. These farmers grow diversified crops and raise animals, live in rural & urban areas, and farm individually, in groups, on incubator farms, and as cooperatives.

Our mission is to connect beginning and historically underserved farmers to each other and resource opportunities; ensuring social justice, environmental stewardship, and profitability.

Our vision is to play a critical role in making smaller-scale farming an attractive & viable livelihood.



The MIFFS Farmer's Guide to APPLYING FOR EQIP

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



STEP 1:

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

HAVE YOU REGISTERED FOR A FARM NUMBER AT FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)? HAVE ALL OF YOUR FIELDS BEEN GIVEN TRACT NUMBERS AND ATTACHED TO YOUR FARM NUMBER?

[REFERENCE FARM NUMBER GUIDES & WEBINARS](#)



Do you have an AD1026 on file at FSA?

AD 1026 is the Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification

✿ To participate in USDA Farm Bill Programs, like EQIP, farmers must follow USDA's Conservation Compliance rules. The AD 1026 helps USDA identify if you have wetlands or land on your farm that is considered high risk for erosion.

[REFERENCE USDA GUIDES AND FORMS WEBINAR](#)

Have you self-identified as a beginning farmer, veteran, or socially disadvantaged?

✿ Do this at BOTH agencies (FSA and NRCS) ✿ Ask to fill out form CCC860 at FSA

USDA Conservation Compliance rules may be stricter than the state of Michigan's. It is always very important to talk to your NRCS District Conservationist or Soil Conservationist about compliance rules for any programs you want to apply for.

STEP 2:

CONSERVATION PLANNING

Q. What is a Conservation Plan?

A. A record of practices or activities that you want to adopt on your farm to improve conservation of natural resources. Conservation Plans document environmental risks that you identify on your farm while working with NRCS or Conservation District staff. They also document different ways that you can work with NRCS to minimize those risks and apply for cost share through EQIP.

There are two types of plans:

- ✿ **PRACTICE PLAN** | This type of plan only documents what practices you want to apply to EQIP for and the environmental risks on your farm that they address.
- ✿ **WHOLE FARM CONSERVATION PLAN** | This plan documents everything you want to do on your farm for conservation. You will work with NRCS staff to identify any environmental risks on your farm and NRCS will make recommendations for practices you can adopt to fix them. The more environmental risks you can identify on your farm, the more competitive your application will be!

▶ All work done with NRCS is confidential. NRCS is not a regulatory agency and will not report you for environmental risks they see on your farm. They are there to help by providing education and assistance.

▶ You are in charge of what goes into your Conservation Plan. You, the land owner, are the decision maker. NRCS can make recommendations but you ultimately decide what you want to do on your farm and how you want NRCS to help.

▶ Working with NRCS is free. You do not need to pay to have a conservation plan developed, to access technical assistance, or to apply for EQIP.

Ask NRCS for a Conservation Plan the minute you think you are interested in applying for EQIP. Don't wait until they announce the application deadline!

HOW TO APPLY FOR EQIP:

- 1 PLANNING**
Stop by your local NRCS field office to discuss your vision for your land.
- 2 APPLICATION**
NRCS will walk you through applying for financial assistance programs.
- 3 ELIGIBILITY**
File the proper paperwork to ensure you are eligible for assistance.
- 4 RANKING**
NRCS will rank the applications according to local resource concerns.
- 5 IMPLEMENTING**
If you are selected, put conservation to work by signing the contract.



THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU APPLY:

- ▶ EQIP is a financial assistance program, not a grant.
- ▶ EQIP Cost Share = Financial Assistance Payments
- ▶ Costshare/Financial Assistance Payments are made AFTER practices are completed and installed:

✿ As a farmer you will need to pay to install all of the practices in your contract up front. Once they are installed NRCS will "certify" the practice and then submit paperwork work to have your payment issued.

✿ NRCS can make special arrangements to help limited income producers by offering alternative payment arrangements. Talk to your local staff about your options!

▶ You will be signing a contract with USDA NRCS if your application is approved. By signing this contract, you are agreeing to participate in EQIP and that you will follow USDA's rules. It is very important to talk to your NRCS staff about which rules you'll need to follow for Conservation Compliance AND for EACH practice that you receive costshare under EQIP.

✿ As a farmer you will need to pay to install all of the practices in your contract up front. Once they are installed NRCS will "certify" the practice and then submit paperwork to have your payment issued.

▶ EQIP funds conservation practices to address environmental risks on the farm. In order to apply for costshare you have to identify and document the environmental risk or concern it will minimize. For more information, see MIFFS' Farmers Guide to EQIP.

