

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced a new sign-up deadline for its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a very popular and important program for Hancock County farmers and landowners. In 2018, Hancock County NRCS obligated more than \$930,000 in EQIP contracts. Currently Hancock County has 35 active EQIP contracts for more than \$4M.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's NRCS announced Friday, October 19, 2018, as the deadline to submit applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in Ohio. We are currently planning for the next crop year, and this October 19, 2018 deadline applies to the 2019 crop year.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program which helps producers make conservation work for them. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while also improving agricultural operations.

Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement improvements, or what NRCS calls conservation practices. Using these practices can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving agricultural operations. Through EQIP, you can voluntarily implement conservation practices, and NRCS co-invests in these practices with you.

Financial assistance is now available in a variety of agricultural categories such as cropland, forestry, pasture operations, and organic. Several special projects are also available which address water quality, forestry management, improving pollinator populations, applying best management practices and many more. All available agricultural categories are listed on the Ohio NRCS website (www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov) under "EQIP Application Deadlines."

To participate in USDA conservation programs, applicants should be farmers or farm or forest landowners and must meet eligibility criteria. Applications signed and submitted to NRCS by the October 19 deadline will be evaluated for fiscal year 2019 funding.

To learn more about EQIP or other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS conservation programs, visit the Get Started with NRCS link on the National NRCS website (www.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact your local office in Findlay at 7868 County Road 140, Suite E, or call 419-581-4511, or email megan.burgess@oh.usda.gov.