

**United States Department of Agriculture**



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Transmitted via Email

May 23, 2008

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-8-9

SUBJECT: LTP – EQIP SIGN-UP STATUS AND TIMELINE

Purpose. To establish an additional 2008 EQIP ranking period.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2008.

June 30, 2008, is the new cut-off for accepting Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications to be scored and ranked for potential funding. This new ranking period is being established in anticipation of additional EQIP funding. The state office will be providing news releases to help promote the additional funding and ranking period. As per EQIP policy (440-CPM-515.80), applications should always be accepted on a continuing basis throughout the year.

This ranking period will use the same ranking tools and fund codes as the earlier 2008 ranking.

Updating status of existing 2008 applications:

Pending & Eligible applications – follow normal procedures.

Deferred applications – use Promote Deferrals button and select 2008 for year. All Deferred applications shall be promoted to Pending. Follow normal procedures from there.

Canceled applications – all Canceled applications are canceled at the request of the participant. Therefore the participant may either submit a new application (CCC-1200) OR at the participant's request, the field office may use the Undo Status button to change the status to Pending.

For all applications on-hand COB June 30, 2008:

1. Select the appropriate Fund Code in the Protracts application screen.
2. Complete the Protracts entry, upload the plan, and complete the ranking by close of business, July 7, 2008.

For all special emphasis funds, after the State Office makes allocation decisions and informs the ASTC (FO), you will then follow your ASTC (FO)'s policy and directions for the selection of these applications for priority funding:

American Indian statewide emphasis funds are available to all offices.

New Immigrant Farmer initiative funds, as well as Beginning Farmer initiative funds, are available to all offices. See the attachment for definitions of New Immigrant Farmer and Beginning Farmer. For Beginning Farmers no additional documentation is required at time of application other than certifying on the CCC-1200 that they meet the definition and understand the potential penalties for submitting a false application.

Drought Assistance funds are available in the same counties identified in the 2007 EQIP special effort.

Flood Assistance special initiative is available in the seven county, declared disaster area, in southeast Minnesota.

PL-566 Watershed special initiatives in both the Whitewater River Watershed and the Kanaranzie Little Rock Watershed have been continued into 2008. Allocations will be made into these fund codes from the state office.

Nutrient Management Initiative funds will not be available for this ranking period.

Once the appropriate fund code is selected the respective scoring worksheet will automatically be available in Protracts.

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All applications must be entered in Protracts by July 7, 2008.

For general county funds: Once all applications are in Protracts, continue with scoring and ranking of applications. Select applications for potential contracts and change their status in Protracts to 'Approved' in order to commit 100% of available funds. Applications scoring 0 points in the national issues of the ranking tool are low priority applications and not eligible for funding.

Finish plan development, second level obligation review, and record 'Signed Contracts' in Protracts by August 15, 2008 for all Approved applications. Funds not obligated to a signed contract by this date will be reallocated either to the next ranked application in that county or to another county as reallocated by the ASTC (FO).

There are NO Ground and Surface Water Conservation funds available for this ranking period. Applicants requesting assistance for conversion of existing center pivots to low pressure systems, as well as for Irrigation Water Management (practice 449), may be funded using the county's general fund code.

The state office will continue to monitor the entered applications, Approved applications, and Signed Contracts in Protracts to ensure adequate progress toward the national goals. ASTC (FO)s should continue to administer EQIP funds in their areas, reallocate funds as needed, ensure PRS goals are being considered, and keep the state office informed of their status.

Questions should be directed to your Assistant State Conservationist (FO) or through the Area to Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist.

WILLIAM HUNT  
State Conservationist

Attachments (2)

DIST: ASTC (FO)  
DC  
ARC  
Program Specialists  
MN EQIP

## New Immigrant Agricultural Producer

1. A New Immigrant Agricultural Producer is defined as:
  - A person actively engaged in farming in the United States and producing agricultural products for 10 years or less;
  - A legal immigrant from a country other than the United States. Foreign individuals and members of foreign entities are eligible for EQIP but must obtain and provide to NRCS a Federal Identification Number; and,
  - Must produce an agricultural commodity on an eligible land use (per EQIP Manual).
2. All EQIP rules and policies must still be followed. This includes control of the land for the period covered by the contract and if eligible, up to 90 percent cost-share if the applicant is a Limited Resource Producer or Beginning Farmer. The applicant must also be in SCIMS.

## Beginning Farmer or Rancher Definition

A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who:

- a. Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity, and
- b. Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
  1. In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm or ranch is located
  2. In the case of a contract with an entity, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.