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# ORGANIC IDAHO



February 2010

Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides

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## Farm Bill Dollars for Organic

*\$400,000 to Organic Farmers in Idaho*

**Marlon Winger and Dee Carlson**

*Idaho Natural Resources Conservation Service*

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) provided special funding for an Organic Initiative through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The Organic Initiative helps organic farmers and agricultural producers transitioning to organic address specific natural resource concerns occurring on their farms and ranches.

In 2009, \$50 million was allocated nationwide, with \$900,000 to Idaho. The Idaho Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) approved 16 EQIP contracts for the Organic Initiative in 2009, totaling approximately \$400,000 (see figure on page 2).

Financial assistance of \$798,000 is available again in 2010 for Idaho producers to implement conservation practices following NRCS standards and specifications. To achieve planning goals on your farm, EQIP provides 280 conservation practice components to treat identified resource concerns.

Applicants interested in EQIP who are organic producers or are transitioning to organic production may find these six conservation practices helpful in meeting provisions of an Organic System Plan: Conservation Crop Rotation, Cover Crops, Nutrient Management, Pest Management, Prescribed Grazing and Forage Harvest Management. Additionally, NRCS provides conservation planning assistance.

Applications to qualify for conservation financial assistance in 2010 through the EQIP Organic Initiative are due by March 12.

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## NCAP Supports Organic Farmers

**Jennifer Miller**

*Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides*

Organic farming is growing in Idaho, with a total of 258 certified producers in 2009, according to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. NCAP is working to support organic farmers in Idaho through educational field days and workshops, advocacy, and consumer education.



We are also working to better understand and meet the needs of Idaho organic farmers and bring attention to the variety of foods and other agricultural products produced. In collaboration with Washington State University, we surveyed Idaho organic farmers regarding their experiences and perspectives. We are currently analyzing the results and will share them in spring 2010.

We held three very popular organic field days in 2009, with more than 200 people attending. NCAP will again offer summer organic field days in 2010. We are also offering two workshops in 2010: a farmer-to-farmer exchange in February and a marketing workshop in November. Stay tuned for details.

If you are not receiving our email announcements about field days and workshops, please send your email to [jmiller@pesticide.org](mailto:jmiller@pesticide.org) to get on the list.

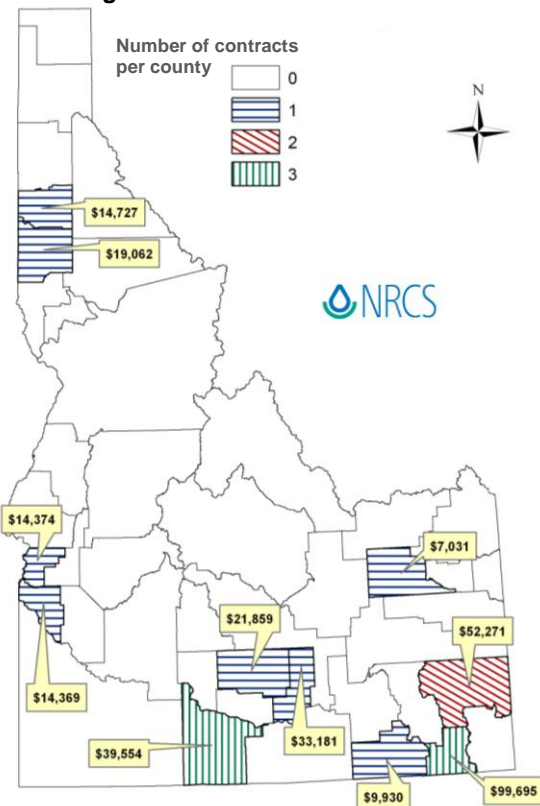
Through this newsletter, we are sharing information from various agencies to better connect you with information and resources specifically for organic farmers. ❖

## Conservation Stewardship Program

Also new in the 2008 Farm Bill was the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to maintain and initiate conservation practices through monetary incentives. With CSP, agricultural and forestry producers maintain their existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations. Example enhancements include: *Extending Filter Strips, Locally Grown and Marketed Farm Products, Establish Pollinator Habitat, Cover Crop Mixes, Legume Cover Crops as a Nitrogen Source, Use of Non-Chemical Methods to Kill Cover Crops, Biological Suppression and Other Non chemical Techniques to Manage Herbaceous Weeds, and High Level Integrated Pest Management to Reduce Pesticide Environmental Risk.*

For fiscal year 2009, Idaho NRCS was allocated 159,725 acres for Agricultural Lands and 7,900 acres for Non-industrial Private Forestlands (NIPF). They preapproved 91 Agricultural Lands applications on 106,000 acres and 11 Non-industrial Private Forestlands (NIPF) applications on approx 7,900 acres. Additional funds are available in 2010.

**EQIP Organic Initiative Contracts for FY 2009**



**If you are interested in assistance:** Visit with your local USDA NRCS field office and invite them to visit your farm as you discuss your goals, and resource concerns that can be addressed in your planning strategy. NRCS accepts applications for EQIP and CSP all year, with one or more ranking periods set annually for each program. Don't wait for the last minute, as good planning takes time for both the producer and the conservation planner. Visit our web site at [www.id.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov) for more information. ❖

## Crop Insurance Works for Organic Producers

*Crop Insurance Fills a Growing Need*

### USDA Risk Management Agency

U.S. producers are turning to certified organic farming systems as a potential way to lower input costs, decrease reliance on nonrenewable resources, capture high-value markets and premium prices, and boost farm income.

One of the best ways for organic producers to protect their valuable investment is by buying the protection that comes with a federally reinsured and subsidized crop insurance policy.

Currently, there are two options for organic producers when it comes to selecting which crop insurance policy fits your operation best:

- 1 Purchase any type of crop insurance plan approved for the crops that are insurable (currently over 358 commodities are covered); or
- 2 Purchase a "whole farm revenue" policy — Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) or AGR-Lite— that covers all agricultural production on the farm regardless of whether or not there is an individual insurance policy for the crop.

### It doesn't cost to ask

Crop insurance is a complicated program to understand. The plan and coverage level that might be right for one farmer's operation may not be the best plan for his or her neighbor. Knowing how to choose may seem as complicated as learning how to speak another language, but it doesn't have to be.

Along with all the crop insurance tools that are available, come well-trained, certified, crop insurance agents who are ready and willing to help you understand your options.

A good crop insurance agent will be able to answer your questions and help you choose the right tools for your operation. It doesn't cost anything to ask.

### For more information:

Contact a crop insurance agent. To find an agent, visit our online locator at: <http://www3.rma.usda.gov/apps/agents/>.

### What is covered by crop insurance?

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) provides coverage for...

- 1 certified organic acreage
- 2 transitional acreage being converted to organic acreage
- 3 buffer zone acreage

Covered perils under most crop insurance policies include losses due to the following causes if the damage is significant enough to lower yield below the deductible for the entire insured unit:

- a. drought

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# ISDA ORGANIC UPDATE

**Brandon Lamb**

*Idaho State Department of Agriculture*

## **Organic System Plan available on-line –**

Revised Organic System Plan (OSP) templates are now available on the web as word documents, which have the capability of being filled in as well as saved.

## **Application timeline and other changes –**

The application deadline has been moved from March 31 to July 1 and the application late fee has been eliminated.

## **Cost-share program use in 2009 –**

In 2009, \$18,000 in cost-share monies were distributed to 27 producers in Idaho. We are working with USDA on new procedures to include more producers in the Cost-Share Program in the future.

## **USDA accreditation renewed –**

The ISDA organic program received accreditation renewal from USDA through 2012.

## **ISDA certified operations increased –**

In 2009, 258 producers were certified organic with ISDA, according to preliminary numbers. In addition, there were 46 handlers and processors and 42 registered operations. In 2008, there were 223 producers, 40 handlers and processors, and 67 registered operations.

Acreage numbers for 2009 are not yet available. In 2008, 156,092 acres were certified organic by ISDA, a growth of 45% from 2007.

## **2009 updated directory now available –**

An updated directory of certified and registered organic operations is available for download at ISDA's website. <http://www.agri.state.id.us/Categories/PlantsInsects/Organic/Documents/OrganicDirectory2009.pdf> ❖



- b. excess moisture
- c. freeze
- d. storm damage
- e. hail
- f. insect damage, disease, and weeds if recognized organic farming practices fail to provide an effective control
- g. other

*Note:* Contamination by application or drift of prohibited substances onto organic, transitional, or buffer zone acreage is not an insured peril. Policies also have some exclusions that you should become familiar with.

Hail is an insurable cause of loss under the Federal crop insurance program. However, separate coverage for spot hail damage, while it is available in most States from crop insurance agents, is not part of the Federal crop insurance program.

## **What is AGR-Lite?**

Adjusted Gross Revenue Lite (AGR-Lite) is a federally subsidized, whole farm revenue insurance policy. This streamlined revenue protection policy provides protection against low revenue due to unavoidable causes, including market fluctuations.

AGR-Lite rewards those who have multiple commodities by making higher levels of coverage available. (The idea is that crop diversity spreads risk over more crops and more time, thereby reducing the insurance risk.) **This makes AGR-Lite especially useful for organic producers.**

A loss payment is triggered when the eligible AGR-Lite gross income for the current year is less than the approved AGR-Lite income (based on the 5-year average and the current year farm plan). Loss payments are made for income reduction because of natural disaster or market fluctuations.

AGR-Lite can work well to protect agricultural production for direct sales and all organic production. It covers: organic production; crops and animals that are not otherwise insurable; vegetables where yields were good but prices were low; herb and vegetable production — where excess moisture caused production to rot before reaching maturity; and, overall economic losses rather than spot losses which might be insignificant in the bigger picture.

AGR-Lite also works well as an umbrella coverage with other Multiple Peril Crop Insurance (MPCI) policies.

## **What plan is right for me?**

**Multiple Peril Crop Insurance (MPCI)\*** provides comprehensive protection against weather-related causes of yield loss and certain other unavoidable perils. Indemnities are paid at a price you elect before planting the crop.

**Revenue Products\*** provide revenue guarantees instead of MPCI yield guarantees. Revenue policies such as Crop Revenue Coverage (CRC), Revenue Assurance (RA), and Income Protection (IP), protect a grower's loss of revenue resulting from low prices, low yields, or a combination of the two.

**Dollar Plan\*** protects against declining value due to damage that causes a yield shortfall for several crops.

\* Currently there is an additional 5 per cent in premium charged to cover any additional risks associated with organic farming under the above plans.

## RESOURCES

**Crop Rotation on Organic Farms: A Planning Manual**  
<http://www.sare.org/publications/croprotation/croprotatio n.pdf>. C.L. Mohler and S.E. Johnson, eds. Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Service. 2009. Or purchase for \$24 by calling 607-255-7654.

**ERS/USDA Data – Organic Prices**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/OrganicPrices/>.

Farmgate and wholesale prices for certain organic and conventional fruits and vegetables, wholesale prices of organic and conventional eggs and broilers, and f.o.b. and spot prices for organic grain and feedstuffs.

**Farm Made: A Guide to On-Farm Processing for Organic Producers**

<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/farmmadereport09.pdf>

G. Kuepper, et al. Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture. 2009.

**Production Guides for Organic Snap Beans, Carrots, Peas, Cucumbers and Squash for Processing**

[http://nysipm.cornell.edu/organic\\_guide/](http://nysipm.cornell.edu/organic_guide/).

A. Seaman, ed. Cornell University Cooperative Extension. 2009.

*Under the following plans of insurance, organic producers are not charged an additional 5 percent in premium:*

**Group Risk Plan (GRP)** insurance is based on the county expected yield rather than individual farm yields. This plan can be useful when a farmer's individual yield tends to track the yield of the county (available primarily on field crops).

**Group Risk Income Plan (GRIP)** makes indemnity payments only when the average county revenue for the insured crop falls below the revenue chosen by the farmer.

**Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** is a pilot program that provides protection against low revenue due to unavoidable natural disasters and market fluctuations that occur during the insurance year. AGR also provides limited animal and animal products protection. It can provide protection on farms with up to \$13 million in gross sales.

**Adjusted Gross Revenue Lite (AGR-Lite)** is a streamlined version of AGR and offers protection to smaller farmers (up to \$2 million in gross sales) for their crops, livestock, and animal products. This is a natural fit for organic farmers.

For a fact sheet on AGR-Lite, go to:

<http://www.rma.usda.gov/pubs/rme/fctsht.html> ❖

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