

# NRCS EQIP High Tunnel Review and Update

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## 2010 EQIP High Tunnel Offering

2010 was the first year of a UNIQUE PILOT PROGRAM!

- 3 year study evaluating conservation benefits
- An EQIP offering targeted to small farms, beginning, limited resource, organic, and historically underserved producers
- “to increase the availability of locally grown produce in a conservation-friendly way”

## What is EQIP?

- Environmental Quality Incentive Program
- Introduced as part of the 1996 Farm Bill
- Provides financial assistance to eligible producers to try “new” conservation practices on their land
- Continuous sign-up
- **MUST FOLLOW NRCS PRACTICE STANDARDS**

## Standard 798 “Seasonal High Tunnel System For Crops”

- National “Temporary” Standard
- Utilized in the conservation learning process
- Can not be modified by the states

## What is the goal?

- Improve Plant Quality
- Improve Soil Quality
- Reduced Nutrient and Pesticide Transport
- Improve Air Quality through reduced transportation inputs
- Reduce energy use through local consumption

## Most Importantly

Through EQIP, in 2010 USDA provided financial assistance to producers to purchase a Seasonal High Tunnel!!!

### EQIP High Tunnel Payments

- Payments based on cost/share off a payment schedule (not a grant program)
- Maximum size paid on is 5% of an acre (2178 square feet)
- Paid based on a dollar per square foot rate.  
Missouri 2010 payment rates: (varies by state)  
Non-Organic \$1.86 or \$2.24  
Organic \$2.00 or \$2.40

### 2010 Recap

NRCS Obligated \$12.9 million for over 2400 High Tunnels in 43 states

### Missouri 2010 EQIP High Tunnels

- 152 High Tunnels \$683, 718
- Certified Organic 11
- Transitioning to Organic 70
- Non Organic 71

### Kansas 2010 EQIP High Tunnels

- 50 High Tunnel Contracts for \$215,976
- Only applicants that were Certified Organic or Transitioning to Organic were eligible

### Iowa 2010 EQIP High Tunnels

- 31 High Tunnels funded for \$106,409
- All Non-Organic

### 2010 Requirements

- **Must be constructed using manufactured kits**
- Must be on land eligible for Farm Bill Programs (FSA)
- Is a non-structural practice
- Must be installed on “existing cultivated cropland”
  - Field that is identified in case file or conservation plan as “Cropland”. Must have been a cultivated crop within the past 5 years (2005-2009)
  - Land that has a cropping history
  - Can't install on farmstead or HQ areas that were previously lawn areas

## 2010 Requirements

- Crop must be grown in the soil profile (no pots, benches, etc)
- Flowers and ornamentals are not eligible crops
- No electrical, permanent heating, or mechanical ventilation systems
  - Will be ventilated by roll-up or drop-down sides or openings in ends (or both)
- The high tunnel will be at least 6 feet tall
- Minimum 6-mil, UV-resistant greenhouse grade plastic cover
  - Producer may opt for heavier plastic, but at their cost



## October 2010 Upgrades

- Removed restrictions on electricity, permanent heating, and mechanical ventilation systems
- Retroactive to those already constructed in the EQIP program

## Roles

The producer should contact the High Tunnel manufacturer regarding technical issues on the tunnel.

The producer should contact University Extension specialists for production related issues.

## Evaluation Requirements

- Because this is an interim conservation practice, it must be evaluated to determine if the technology is adequate to address the resource concerns
- The Field Office will conduct an on-site inspection each of the first 3 years
- An evaluation form will be completed each of the 3 years

## Items to be evaluated

- Size and cost of system
  - First year only
- Annual maintenance requirements and cost
- Resource concerns addressed
- Erosion before and after
  - Water and wind
- How much was growing season extended?
  - Drainage/erosion
    - Additional practices installed?
    - How effective were they?
  - Was production increased? How much?
  - Nutrient Management
    - Rates before and after installation
  - Pest Management
    - IPM activities before and after the structure

## Life Span Requirement

Each EQIP Practice has a life span. The life span for 798 is 5 years. Therefore, **the High Tunnel must be maintained to the standard for 5 years.**

## How Do I Apply?

- Go to your local USDA Service Center as soon as possible and tell them you want to apply for EQIP
- Phone Book or <http://www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/>
- Complete the application form NRCS-CPA-1200
- After completing the application, if you have never participated in Farm Bill Programs, you will go to the Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- The Organic and Transitioning to Organic deadline is March 4, 2011
- The "non-organic" High Tunnel offering has not been released by National Headquarters. GO AHEAD AND APPLY NOW

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