How to talk to your NRCS office about the Organic Transition Initiative (OTI) resources available for you

Who should I speak with?

Contact your local NRCS office, or contact your state office for additional assistance. You can also visit this Topp West Resources page and find NRCS contacts for each of the western states under OTI Resources.

Information to gather before your conversation:

- Up-to-date records on Farmers.gov
- Previous three years of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)
- How you have access and control over the land
- Proof of organic certification, or organic transition records
- Previous improvements and projects made to the property

Questions to ask:

Eligibility:

1) I own/rent my land. What documents will you need for completion of my EQIP application by the deadline?

2) I am eligible for the increased and advanced payment option for Historically Underserved farmers. How will this change my application process?

3) My farm is certified/transitioning to organic. What additional information will you need for completing my conservation plan and application by the deadline?

4) Does eligibility for assistance under CPS-823 differ from traditional eligibility?

Assistance Available:

1) What financial and technical assistance is available to my farm through CPS-823?

2) Are there any state initiatives that I qualify for as an organic or transitioning-to-organic producer?

3) Can I get financial assistance for conservation work I have already started or completed?

4) Can NRCS help me develop and implement a comprehensive conservation plan that is tailored to my organic operation?

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https://ofrf.org/news/topp-west-resources/
Questions to ask (cont’d):

**Application Process/Logistics:**

1) I’m interested in EQIP programs to address conservation issues/projects of interest for my farm. What do you need from me to get started on my application?

2) How soon can a conservationist visit my farm to set up a conservation plan (AD 1026)? Is that the same as a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

3) When is the deadline for the next EQIP ranking period?

4) What are the state and national resource concerns that are the highest priority? Will my project address them?

**After an award:**

1) Are there things that I will need to do after I get the financial assistance to monitor or evaluate the project?

2) What are the reporting requirements and when do they need to be submitted?

3) How will NRCS communicate updates, changes or new opportunities related to my project or future projects?

4) Can NRCS provide guidance on maintaining records that satisfy both organic certification and NRCS program requirements?

What if the Field Agent is unaware of CPS-823 or the conservation benefits of organic agriculture?

NRCS employees may not be familiar with the specifics of organic certification and management; patience and persistence will be crucial to getting access to the assistance you need and deserve.

See these NRCS-sponsored webinars and training modules for additional resources that you can share with your NRCS service providers to help educate them about organic transition support.

Contact the state office if you continue to experience a lack of understanding or support.

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