

## 2008 FARM BILL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROVISIONS

Thanks to the support and efforts of many of you, the 2008 Farm Bill has provided unprecedented support for organic agriculture activities. Please contact [kdelate@iastate.edu](mailto:kdelate@iastate.edu) if you need more information on any funding source.

**Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)** will receive \$5 million a year in additional annual appropriations. Mandatory funding has increased to \$78 million. OREI outlines 8 purposes encompassing international trade, marketing, conservation, research and development. Research must be conducted in conjunction with a University or scholastic institute. Iowa State University has been funded through this program to study no-till organic systems.

The 2008 Farm Bill provided \$5 million in funding for the **Organic Data Initiative** to expand collection and analysis of economic information. An additional \$5 million a year is authorized.

Mandatory funding for the **National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program** increased from \$5 million to \$22 million. Organic producers can apply for reimbursement of up to 75% of the cost of certifying their operations, with a cap of \$750 per payment per year. The Iowa Organic Program of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) will direct the distribution of these funds to those eligible. Contact the Iowa Organic Certification Program at 515-281-7656 with any further questions. Applications are available online at the [IDALS website](#).

\$5 million in support for the **National Organic Program** was included for the first time. Authorized funding increases to \$11 million by 2012. The National Organic Program regulates organic standards and certification.

Iowa organic producers and transitioning producers are now eligible for special assistance through the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**. Payments are limited to \$20,000 annually and \$80,000 over a six-year period. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program of the NRCS available to offer financial and technical to implement structural and management practices including cover crops, crop rotations, fencing and watering for rotational grazing, pest management and field borders on eligible agricultural land.

Applicants will need to include their Organic System Plan (OSP) when applying for financial assistance to transition to organic agriculture, and those who have developed a NRCS conservation plan will receive priority. Applications for EQIP are available at local NRCS offices and are accepted on a continuous basis. Criteria and cut off dates for selection vary by county. Local NRCS EQIP information is available [here](#).

Iowa NRCS is also offering producers \$50 per acre for using conservation crop rotations during the three-year organic transitioning process. Iowa producers can also receive \$6-\$15 per acre for implementing a pest management plan during the organic transition process.

Organic certified producers already integrating conservation systems on their farm are encouraged participate in the NRCS **Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)**. This

new program provides technical and financial assistance to producers who are willing to implement a higher level of conservation on their operations. Producers participating in CStP receive incentive payments for the specified higher levels of conservation treatment.