

## **GUIDELINES *for* FY 2008 Small Scale Farmers in South Carolina**

### **PURPOSE**

There is an ongoing national and state concern over the low participation of small farmers in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill Programs.

The purpose of this category is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to Small Scale Farmers. The target audience is defined as small farmers who have historically not participated in nor ever ranked high enough to be selected for a contract. We must be innovative in allowing small farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for small farms to implement and maintain.

In developing and implementing this outreach initiative in South Carolina, NRCS technical practices and programs will help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by small farmers.

**Follow guidelines identified under EQIP Manual, section 515 and the Conservation Programs Manual, section 512 unless specifically identified in the following guidance.**

- All Small Scale Farmer funds will be used to help **small farmers with a state average of 197 acres or less per operation**; (A 5% variance will be allowed). Acres can be any combination of cropland and/or grassland, wooded areas.
- Applicants must not have participated in NRCS programs for the past 10 years with the exception of the 2005-2007 Small Farmer Initiative.
- The income limit for eligibility will be \$63,000 adjusted gross family income (5% variance allowed) based on last 2 years of income tax returns. The producer will be allowed to self-certify.
- **Acres being planted to alternative crops are optional but for a list go to [http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFIC\\_pubs/altlist](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFIC_pubs/altlist).**
- **Cost share rates will be up to 75 percent for all practices, based on the state average cost list.**
- **All problematic application(s) and contract(s) items will be sent for review by the State Resource Conservationist along with the field staff's proposed action to ensure consistency with program delivery across the state.**
- **Existing 2005-2007 SFI contract holders will be allowed to develop a second contract, the new contract must address separate practices or concerns.**
- All participants must be registered in the Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) or grant permission to be registered in SCIMS.

- **2008 Average State Cost will be used when developing contracts.**
  - **Nutrient, pest management, and record keeping will be optional** for all conservation plans. There will be an incentive payment of \$500/year for three years of the contract period. This is a maximum value of \$1500. Record keeping will be optional but to acquire points on ranking tool this practice must be selected.
  - All contract participants are encouraged to attend and provide documentation that a recent farm record management training class has been completed. Please utilize Clemson Extension to provide this type of training session. A release form must be signed by landowner for NRCS to release record keeping documentation. This form is incorporated into the self certification application.
  - **Remember to complete the irrigation self certification application.**
  - **Existing field office technical standards are available to accomplish conservation planning for small scale farms.**
  - **As needed**, NRCS will develop and apply innovative and cost effective technical standards according to policy and place in the field office technical guide.
  - General practice planning guide lines:
    1. **Fence** – Practice Code 382 includes fencing, that meets NRCS standards and as provided under the EQIP guidelines.
    2. **Irrigation Conversion** – Practice Code 441 – Improved Micro Irrigation Systems
      - A. Cost share limits are same as general EQIP
      - B. Improved Micro Irrigation - \$1500/acre
    3. **Irrigation Water Management Micro** – Practice Code 449 – This is an incentive payment for micro irrigation systems which is used for both micro and sprinkler. There are two components on cost list.
      - A. Irrigation Water Management – Micro - \$600/acre
      - B. Management Payments may be received only three times. The incentive payments for this practice is associated with purchase and installation of plastic mulch, drip tape, the use of devices such as the tensiometer for conserving and applying adequate water to the crops grown when the drip irrigation system is in operation.
    4. Irrigation payments are limited to \$40,000 per operation and must meet criteria as outlined in the general EQIP guidance document.
    5. If producer wants to **establish** NEW silvopasture, use 612 and 512 components for cost share.
    6. Water Wells will be primarily recommended for livestock watering needs.

It is very important that we **do not allow vendor payments and the cash flow of small farmers** to become a barrier to applying practices to the land. **NRCS may assist participants in completing and using the CC-36 Form, Assignment of Payment, to work with small farmers in paying for conservation work and services provided under the Small Scale Farmer contracts.** This tool has been used in the past and is still being used by the Farm Service Agency.

Ranking to be done by: December 15, 2007

Funding determination will be made: January 12, 2008

Conservation Plans and contracts will be signed and written by: March 1, 2008

The sign-up period in South Carolina will run the same as the General EQIP signup ending 10/01/2007.

<b>FY 2008 SMALL SCALE FARMER SOUTH CAROLINA</b>	<b>APPLICANT SELF-CERTIFICATION</b>
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I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby certify that I meet the  
**(Print Applicant's Name)**

eligibility requirements of the South Carolina Small Scale Farmer. These requirements are the same as those for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), (section 515 of Conservation Program Manual) and those contained in the "FY 2008 Guidelines for Small Scale Farmer of South Carolina."

These requirements include, but are not limited to, the following items of emphasis:

- 1.) My entire farming operation consists of 197 acres or less (*a 5% variance is allowed*)
- 2.) My annual adjusted gross family income is \$63,000 or less based on the last 2 years income tax returns (*a 5% variance is allowed*).
- 3.) I have not participated in any Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs for the past 10 years with the exception of a 2005- 2007 Small Farmer Initiative (SFI) contract.

I hereby authorize the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to release the contact information listed below to Clemson Extension Service (CES) for the purpose of their making arrangements to provide me with training and instruction in nutrient management in maintaining records pertaining to nutrient management and production costs.

**I APPROVE the release of my information to CES.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE** **DATE**

**I DISAPPROVE the release of my information to CES.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SIGNATURE** **DATE**

I further understand and agree to provide any needed documentation as may be requested by a NRCS employee to verify my eligibility. Failure to provide the requested documentation may result in the cancellation of the application and/or contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Applicant* *Date*

