



## DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT

*Coronado SWCD Meeting*

*January 19, 2017*

### **Field Office Updates**

*Currently Albuquerque FO has 22 applications and Cuba FO has 26 and Los Lunas has 44 application for 2017 EQIP funding. Staff working on completing site visits, eligibility, cost estimates, and planning prior to ranking. This year applications will use Team funding pools and will compete for one fund based on land use. Tribal funds will be funded through a North Area funding pool.*

*EQIP 2017 – Deadline for EQIP 2017 was December 16. Currently, Team 2 has exactly **92 EQIP applications**. Deadline to complete ranking is April 14<sup>th</sup>. Applications must all be obligated by June 6, 2017. Now accepting applications for EQIP 2018 fiscal year.*

*CSP 2017 – Deadline to apply for Conservation Stewardship Program February 3, 2017.*

### **EQIP - Initiative Programs Available:**

#### **ORGANIC INITIATIVE**



**What Is The Organic Initiative?** - The Organic Initiative provides financial assistance to implement a broad set of conservation practices to assist organic producers in addressing resource concerns including, but not limited to assistance with:

- Developing a conservation plan
- Establishing buffer zones
- Planning and installing pollinator habitat
- Improving soil quality and organic matter while minimizing erosion
- Developing a grazing plan and supportive livestock practices
- Improving irrigation efficiency
- Enhancing cropping rotations and nutrient management

**Applicants should use the following categories to identify their current or future production system:**

Certified Organic - Certified organic producers shall provide NRCS with a copy of their USDA NOP Organic Certificate or proof of good standing from a USDA accredited certifying agent and certification must be maintained for the life of the EQIP contract.

Exempt from Certification of the National Organic Program (NOP) - Exempt producers who are selling less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from NOP's certification. Exempt organic producers are eligible for the EQIP Organic Initiative provided that they self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an OSP.

Transitioning to Organic – Participants who are transitioning to organic production shall self-certify that they agree to develop and work toward implementing an Organic System (OSP).

The EQIP Organic Initiative contracts are limited to \$20,000 per fiscal year and \$80,000 during any 6-year period for persons or legal entities. There is no authority to waive the annual payment limitation or total payment limitation. Federally recognized Indian Tribes are not subject to payment or EQIP contract limitations.

## EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative



High tunnels are enclosed polyethylene, polycarbonate, plastic, or fabric covered structures that are used to cover and protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold, to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnels are easy to build, maintain, and move; they provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season, reduce or avoid use of pesticides and reduce run off and leaching of nitrogen. Unlike greenhouses, they require no energy, relying on natural sunlight to modify the climate inside to create favorable conditions for growing vegetable and other specialty crops. The NRCS conservation practice for high tunnels is High Tunnel System (325). The practice is intended to extend the growing season early and late in the growing year. High tunnels can be used to improve soil health by allowing farmers to increase the diversity of crops that are grown, reduce bare fallow periods and plant cover crops. High tunnels can reduce energy use and improve air quality by producing locally grown food that reduces the amount of transportation needed to supply fresh produce. High tunnels can conserve water, allow for better management of nutrients and reduce pesticide use. For the High Tunnel Initiative the high tunnels must be placed on existing cropland. There is no minimum acreage or minimum amount of crop production to qualify. Cropland can be located in urban areas. The crops grown within the seasonal high tunnel must be planted

directly into the soil covered by the seasonal high tunnel. The use of pots, growing racks or hydroponics is not permitted.

PEARL ARMIJO, DC (TEAM 2)