



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Young: \$845,000 Available for NY Organic Farming

CATHARINE YOUNG May 20, 2009

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**ALBANY** – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – Olean), ranking member of the New York State Senate’s Agriculture committee, today urged farmers who are certified organic, or who are transitioning to organic production, to apply for available grant assistance before the May 29<sup>th</sup> deadline.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), as part of its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative, has set aside more than \$845,000 in EQIP funds to encourage more organic production in New York State.

“Organic farming is one of the fastest growing segments of agriculture,” said Sen. Young. “This is a great opportunity for current organic producers, especially for people who have been thinking about making the transition to organic production.”

Sen. Young said those eligible include farming operation in the three-year process of transitioning to organic production; existing certified organic farmers who want to transition additional acres or animals; and existing certified organic farmers who need to adopt additional conservation measures. Producers who sell less than \$5,000 in agricultural products, and are thus exempt from formal organic certification, also are eligible for Organic Initiative payments.

Individual applicants can receive a maximum of \$80,000 over the next six years, and no more than \$20,000 in any one year. Farmers who have already applied for EQIP funding may choose to move their application into the separate pool of funding for the Organic Initiative, which will have higher payment rates for some practices than the regular EQIP program. Additional information on the 2009 EQIP Organic Initiative is available at:

<http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>.

All applications received by the May 29<sup>th</sup> deadline will be ranked using national and, in some cases, state-level criteria related to how well the proposed contract contributes to conserving soil, water quality and other resource concerns. Farmers who are awarded a contract will be eligible for technical assistance to assist with implementation of the practices. NRCS has set aside additional funding for technical assistance for this initiative which will not count against the payment limitation of the program.

New York State ranks among the top ten states in the country for the number of organic farms. In 2007, the U.S. Census identified 1,027 organic farms in New York State with nearly 121,000 acres in production, although only 736 farms are known to be certified organic. Organic dairy farms are the largest segment of the organic farm community in New York State with nearly 400 farms. The Census also found that 562 farms were transitioning another 30,687 acres to organic production.

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