



Financial Assistance is Available to Implement Master Farmer Participant Conservation Plans



Completion of the Louisiana Master Farmer Program consists of three phases.

Phase 1

Classroom instruction on environmental stewardship related to water quality regulations, conservation planning and practices and USDA Farm Bill conservation funding.

Phase 2

Attendance at Model Farm Field Days, which include on-farm viewing of implemented, commodity-specific conservation practices.

Phase 3

Development and implementation of a farm-specific comprehensive conservation plan.

Upon completion of the Louisiana Master Farmer Program, producers can be certified by the Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture in environmental stewardship.

abc's

of Implementing (and Funding) a Conservation Plan

The Louisiana Master Farmer Program is a partnership effort between the LSU AgCenter, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Louisiana Cattleman's Association and Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.

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a. Request Conservation Planning Assistance

Most participants find Phase 3 of the program to be the most challenging.

Phase 3 consists of requesting, developing, and implementing a comprehensive **conservation plan** or **Resource Management System (RMS)** for the participant's entire farming operation through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Many variables determine how long it takes to complete this phase. Some of these include the size of the operation and the resource problems that exist on the farm, whether the land is rented or owned, finances, and conservation and farming goals. In order to request this plan, a producer contacts the local NRCS office and requests assistance in developing an RMS plan.

b. Work With NRCS to Develop a Conservation Plan

The technical assistance needed to develop the RMS level plan is provided by NRCS at no cost to the applicant. A resource inventory is conducted on the farming operation, resource problems are identified and the participant is provided with information on various

conservation practices that could be used to solve the resource problems identified. The participant then selects the set of conservation practices that best fit his/her conservation and farming goals and financial situation.

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c. Apply for Financial Assistance Through EQIP

Costs of implementing the conservation practices selected are often an important consideration in scheduling completion of implementation of the participant's conservation plan. NRCS, working

with the LSU AgCenter, has made provisions for helping Master Farmer Program participants with financial assistance to implement their RMS plans through the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**.

See reverse side for EQIP financial incentives.



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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Financial Incentives 2 options

Option 1

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a Farm Bill conservation program available to producers that provides financial assistance to help offset the cost of implementing conservation practices on the participant's land.

Producers apply for this assistance at their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office.

Applications are ranked and compete based on the conservation benefits to be achieved through the practices they intend to implement.

Participants in the Louisiana Master Farmer Program who have completed at least one phase of the program are given extra points during the ranking process on their applications for regular EQIP financial assistance.

These extra points will increase the possibility of the applicant being selected to obtain financial assistance under EQIP to implement conservation practices.

Option 2

Louisiana Master Farmer Program Participants are eligible to apply for financial assistance through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) effort between the LSU AgCenter and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Through this initiative, producers who are willing to implement conservation practices identified as needed in their RMS conservation plan may participate in a special Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) opportunity.

Under this option NRCS will provide a higher financial assistance payment for implementing conservation practices than under the regular EQIP program. In addition, applicants will only compete for selection for funding with other Louisiana Master Farmer Program participants who have completed conservation plan development and want to implement their RMS plan.

The opportunity to participate in this special EQIP option is also extended to any currently Certified Master Farmer who has identified additional resource problems in their farming operation that need to be addressed or has acquired additional land that they want to include in their RMS plan in order to maintain their Master Farmer certification.

For More Information

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or your local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



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