

# New Organic Transition Management EQIP Practice 823

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has many programs to help farmers transition to organic farming operations. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is “NRCS’ flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.” Under EQIP, Organic Transition Initiative (OTI) Organic Management Practice Standard 823 is specifically meant to help address resource concerns for farmers transitioning to organic management.

## HELP THE NRCS HELP YOU

- This new practice provides cost share payments for organic and transitioning producers.
- The 823 practice is different for NRCS: it offers a suite of practices that enhance the organic production system on the farm, instead of just one practice.
- The more practices you apply for, the higher your payment. The contract length varies (typically 3 yrs), but you don’t have to initiate all practices each year.
  - Average payments vary but can range from \$250 to \$2,000+ per acre per year depending the number of practices and your cropping system.
  - You pay up front for the practice and get paid later that year after NRCS has visited your farm to verify completion of the contracted activities.

## GETTING STARTED

Since this practice is so new, many NRCS county offices aren’t sure how to handle it. Here are a few pointers to help them, help you!

### Prepare:

State practices may vary. [Look over Nebraska’s Organic Management Practice Standard 823](#), for ideas of which practices you may want to implement to help prepare for your conversation with NRCS. Most NRCS practices can be rolled into 823, even if they’re not specifically listed. You can have an 823 contract with multiple practices in addition to separate contracts.

### Brainstorm:

- What resource concerns do you have?
- What specific practices do you want to include?
- What and how much land is involved?
- Add these ideas to a map/aerial photo of your farm.

Not sure where to start? Call [OFA’s Farmer Services Team](#) (833-724-3834) to talk through your ideas!

### Think about why you are doing the practice:

- Improving soil health?
- Reducing erosion?
- Improving plant productivity and health?
- Reducing plant pest or disease pressure?
- Enhancing wildlife and beneficial insect habitat, especially with native plantings?
- Improving quality of forages for grazing or harvest?

Remember, one practice can provide numerous benefits. For example, cover crops improve soil health, lessen erosion, and, if flowering, can provide beneficial insect habitat. These overlapping benefits can earn your application more points!

## MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

You can [visit your NRCS office](#) any time to apply for EQIP, but there are “ranking dates” where all applications are ranked to decide which farmers are offered contracts. For 823, it may be useful to visit your NRCS office and apply at least 6 weeks before the ranking date, to give the NRCS agent time to visit your farm and discuss your goals, ideas, and resource concerns. NRCS staff are very knowledgeable and might think of things that you might have missed!

Contracts are usually written 4-6 months after you apply. [Find ranking dates on the NRCS website.](#)