

New Organic Transition Management EQIP Practice 823

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has many programs to help farmers convert 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 823 (OTI) is specifically meant to help those transitioning to organic operations.

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 for this practice is typically three years long, but you don’t have to initiate all practices each year.
 - Payments range from \$250 to \$2,000+ per acre per year depending on how many practices are done and your cropping system.
 - You pay up front for the practice in the spring and get paid in the fall of that year after NRCS has visited your farm to verify your contract activities have been completed.

SOME 823 PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

- Contour buffer strips
- Diversion to control erosion
- Field Border for beneficial insect habitat
- Field Strip to channel water on steeper slopes
- Conservation cover
- High or low tunnel system
- Irrigation water management
- Mulching
- Conservation crop rotation
- Windbreak establishment

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:

Look over practice standard 823, and see which practices you may want to implement. 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.

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

Brainstorm:

- What resource concerns you have
- What specific practices you want to do
- Where you want to do it, and how many acres, linear feet or square feet it may be
- Add these ideas to a hand drawn map or on an aerial photo of your farm, so they know what is being requested and where on your land

Think about why you are doing the practice:

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

NRCS wants to know what resource concerns you're addressing, and this will help earn your application more points. One practice can provide numerous benefits, for example, cover crops improve soil health, lessen erosion, and if flowering, can provide beneficial insect habitat.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

For 823, it would 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 and ideas. They are very knowledgeable and might think of things that you might have missed!

State	Position	Contact Name & Email Link	Contact Number	Ranking Date	Deadline	State Directory	State EQIP Website
Colorado	FA EQIP Program manager	Stacey Eskew	719-245-3020	Round 1- Dec 1, 2023 Round 2- Feb 16, 2024	2/16/24	NRCS CO State Directory	EQIP Colorado
Kansas	EQIP Program Assistant	Timothy Weltmer	785-216-0364	Round 1- Nov 17, 2023 Round 2- April 19, 2024	4/19/24	NRCS KS State Directory	EQIP Kansas
Nebraska	EQIP Program Manager	Conor Ward	402-437-4112	Round 1- Nov 17, 2023 Round 2- March 9, 2024	3/9/24	NRCS NE State Directory	EQIP Nebraska
North Dakota	Program Contact: Assistant State Conservationist	Jarvis R. Keney	701-530-2005	Round 1- March 15, 2024 Round 2- April 12, 2024 Round 3- May 10, 2024	3/1/24	NRCS ND State Directory	EQIP North Dakota
South Dakota	EQIP Coordinator	Andrew Thomason	605-352-1281	Round 1- Sept 3, 2023 Round 2- Feb 16, 2024	3/8/24	NRCS SD State Directory	EQIP South Dakota
Oklahoma	EQIP Program Manager	Dustin Stoner	405-742-1278	Round 1- Nov 3, 2023 Round 2- March 1, 2024	3/1/24	NRCS OK State Directory	EQIP Oklahoma

*You can go into 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. Contracts are usually written 4-6 months after you apply.