

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, October 11, 1999

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MDA UNVEILS INNOVATIVE ORGANIC COST-SHARE PROGRAM

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Minnesota broke new ground in organic agriculture this week with the unveiling of a new \$35,000 cost-sharing program designed to partially reimburse farmers for the cost of organic inspection and certification. Funded by the Organic Agriculture Promotion and Education Act passed during the 1999 Minnesota legislative session, the cost-share program is the first of its kind in the country.

Available through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Organic Cost Share Program will reimburse Minnesota producers for up to two-thirds of the cost for organic inspection and certification. Applications will be taken through December 31, 1999, for certifications granted for the 1999 crop year. Producers will be eligible for up to five years of payments, with a maximum annual payment of \$200 per producer.

MDA Commissioner Gene Hugoson said the cost-share program fits well with the Department's goal of giving farmers flexibility to adapt to marketplace developments.

"Organic agriculture is a rapidly growing part of Minnesota's farm sector, and this innovative cost-share program will certainly help with that development," Commissioner Hugoson said. "This program will smooth the path for people who are interested in getting involved in organic food production."

A total of \$35,000 is available for the Organic Cost Share Program this year. Eligible applicants will receive pro-rated payments if demand for the program exceeds this total. Rules for administering this program were developed with input from organic industry representatives through the Organic Advisory Task Force.

For more information, contact the Organic Program of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Applicants must provide proof of certification and proof of payment, and they must fill out the Organic Cost Share Application form. This form can be obtained on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us or by contacting Prescott Bergh, MDA Organic Program Director, at 90 West Plato Blvd., St. Paul MN, 55107. Bergh can be reached by phone at 651-215-0367, or by e-mail at prescott.bergh@state.mn.us.

October 1999

Dear Organic Producer,

Enclosed is the application form for reimbursement of your organic certification costs in 1999. Each certified organic farm in Minnesota is eligible for up to two-thirds of the total cost of certification with a limit of \$200 per producer. Certification costs include both inspection fees and charges from the certification agency. Each producer is eligible for five years. We anticipate that we may have more requests than we have funds. If this occurs, we will pro-rate payments to ensure that all qualified applicants receive some benefit.

In addition to providing funds for the cost share program, the 1999 Minnesota State Legislature also required the Department of Agriculture to collect information on the size and strength of the organic industry in Minnesota and to report to them in 2000. We are requesting information on your crops and acres and livestock as part of the cost share application form. Your response to these production questions is not required for participation in the cost share program. However, we hope you will help us give a true representation of the vitality of the organic sector by completing this part of the application.

Please read and follow the instructions. In addition to the application form, you need to submit proof of certification and proof of payment to the certification agency. The applications are due by December 31, 1999.

This organic certification cost share program is the first in the nation. We hope that you will participate and also share your ideas with us on how to improve it for next year. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

Sincerely,

Prescott Bergh
Organic Program Coordinator

Phone: 651-215-0367
E-mail: prescott.bergh@state.mn.us

1999 Organic Certification Cost Share Reimbursement Application Form

Instructions

1. Farm must be within the State of Minnesota.
2. Farm must have been inspected and certified in calendar year 1999.
3. Certification must have been granted in calendar year 1999 for farm production in 1999.
4. Certification agency must be a Designated Certification Organization (DCO) or Approved Certification Organization (ACO) listed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. As of October 6, 1999 current DCO's are Farm Verified Organic (FVO), Living Farms, Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA), Organic Growers and Buyers Association (OGBA) and Quality Assurance International (QAI). Current ACO's are California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) and Oregon Tilth, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture and the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assn. (MOFGA).
5. In the case of multiple certifications, only one payment shall be made for each farm.
6. Each farm is eligible for a payment of up to two-thirds the total cost of certification with a maximum payment of \$200.
7. Certification costs include inspection fees as well as fees charged by the certification agency.
8. In the event that demand exceeds the supply of funds, all applicants shall receive a prorated payment based on the total amount of requests.
9. This form, along with a photocopy of your 1999 Organic Certificate from your certification organization and proof of payment must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Attn: Prescott Bergh, Organic Program, 90 W. Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107.
10. Applications must be postmarked no later than December 31, 1999.

Return to:

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Attn: Prescott Bergh, Organic Program
90 West Plato Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55107
651-215-0367

Application must be postmarked by December 31, 1999

1999 Organic Certification Cost Share Reimbursement Application Form

PLEASE PRINT YOUR RESPONSES BELOW

Name: _____
 Farm /Business name: _____
 Address: _____
 Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Day phone: (____) _____ - _____ Evening phone: (____) _____ - _____
 Mobile phone: (____) _____ - _____ Fax: (____) _____ - _____
 E-Mail: _____

Farm location if different than above: _____

Farm ownership: Sole proprietor Partnership Limited Liability Corporation other

Farm certified by:

Agency Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Date of most recent organic certificate from agency: _____

(Attach photocopy of certificate)

Total paid for certification for 1999 crop year: \$ _____

(Attach copy of proof of payment)

Organic Crops

(Please add a T after each number if transitional)

List Crop	Crop				
	Crop 1	Crop 2	Crop 3	Crop 4	Crop 5
Acres Farmed Organically	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Acres Farmed in Transition	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Acres Farmed Conventionally	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Acres Farmed	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Organic Livestock

(Please add a T after each number if transitional)

	Cows	Heifers	Calves	Steers	Bulls
Number of Beef Cattle	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Number of Dairy Cattle	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Sows	Gilts	Feeders ³²		
	Barrows	Boars			
Number of Hogs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Meat Birds	Layers			
Number of Chickens	_____	_____			
Number of Turkeys	_____	_____			
Other	_____				