

**The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers assistance to orchardists for implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices**

*North Central Washington, South Central Washington & Columbia Basin Highlights*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), is offering growers financial assistance for 2009 as an incentive to advance the use of IPM practices. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program, which is competitive due to limited funds. Over \$500,000 was awarded for orchard pest management in Washington for 2008.

While WSU's Pest Management Transition Project offers the educational assistance to help growers successfully transition from broad-spectrum insecticides into mating disruption and IPM technologies, EQIP can provide qualified growers with the financial assistance to make the transition.

**This year's signup deadline is July 15, 2008.** Applications submitted prior the deadline are encouraged by NRCS to allow time for an on-site visit with an NRCS conservationist.

**New considerations for 2009:**

- Growers may apply to implement both an irrigation system upgrade and pest management.
- For the first time, orchardists can qualify for assistance with the costs of pest management practices without applying for an irrigation system upgrade in three areas: North Central (Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan counties), Big Bend (Grant Adams, Kittitas counties) and South Central (Yakima, Benton, Klickitat counties). [Currently, not available for Franklin or Walla Walla counties.]
- Growers who have applied previously but were not awarded contracts due to limited EQIP funds are encouraged to re-apply.

**Available Orchard Pest Management Practices with payments per year for up to three years include:**

- *Codling moth mating disruption - \$125/acre*
- *Use of reduced risk pesticides - \$75/acre*
- *Conversion to use of low-volume precision sprayers - \$50/acre*
- *Required pest management annual plan, including orchard scouting - \$1,000 per contract*

**The combined cap on pest management component payments is \$25,000 per contract. Implementation of these practices and payments usually takes place over 2 to 3 years.**

**If you want to sign up** contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office:

Wenatchee – 664-0275	Yakima – 454-5743
Waterville – 745-8362 Ext. 3	Zillah – 829-3003
Okanogan – 422-2750 Ext. 3	Prosser – 786-1923
Ephrata – 754-2463 Ext. 3	

First, visit the Farm Services Agency (FSA) in the same building as NRCS and update your farm information in their database to ensure your eligibility for EQIP. At the same time, you may stop by NRCS and ask to apply for EQIP. You will sign the application cover sheet. If the full application isn't completed during your first visit, NRCS staff will set up a time to meet you and complete the application at this time. This process takes about 1 – 1 ½ hours. A farm visit may be included and you may request it, since the NRCS conservationist may help you identify other projects on your property that qualify for assistance, such as eroding access roads.

NRCS encourages farmers to develop a plan for conservation of all natural resources on their farms: water, soil, air quality, and wildlife. EQIP applications are ranked on the natural resource benefits provided. In addition to adopting pest management practices that reduce environmental risk, other conservation practices valuable in and around orchards include:

- Irrigation system improvements that result in reduced water use and erosion
- Soil moisture monitoring for irrigation scheduling
- Nutrient management:
  - Soil testing – to assess nutrients that may leach and affect water quality
  - Improving soil condition by increasing organic matter with composts
- Providing food, water or shelter for wildlife, beneficial insects or native pollinators
- Use of fabric mulch (weed barrier) to reduce herbicide use and moisture loss

#### **Who can qualify for assistance?**

- Agricultural producers who make at least \$1,000 in gross farm sales.
- Applicant must control the land for the contract period (may own or lease).
- Individuals or entities that have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the year the contract is approved.
- Growers with an AGI above \$2.5 million can qualify if 75 percent of the AGI is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operation.
- An owner with multiple entities or management units can apply for separate contracts for those units within the same fiscal year.
- The purpose of providing information on your farm to the USDA Farm Services Agency is to determine eligibility.

Eligible land includes: cropland, rangeland, pasture, forestland, and other farm or ranch lands where the program is delivered. Organic and transition to organic orchards are eligible.

**If you are interested in learning more, please call Naná Simone, Pest Management Transition Project EQIP Coordinator: Phone: 509-667-9557 or cell 630-2067. Email [nanas@nwi.net](mailto:nanas@nwi.net). (Se habla español).**

**More information on the program for orchardists is also on the: Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission website <http://www.treefruitresearch.com/> or on the Pest Management Transition Project website: <http://pmtf.wsu.edu/EQIP.html>**

**For the most up-to-date information and to download the application directly from NRCS-EQIP, visit: <http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqpi/FY09/index.html>**

**For specific information on ranking criteria for applications, eligible practices and payment limits (“hold downs”), visit: [http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/FY09/eqip\\_packets.html#South\\_Central\\_Team](http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/FY09/eqip_packets.html#South_Central_Team) and click on your county.**