USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 17, 2021 - Organic producers and handlers can now apply for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds to assist with the cost of receiving or maintaining organic certification. Applications for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) are due Nov. 1, 2021.

"USDA is here to help all producers, including those who grow our nation's organic food and fiber. Many farmers have told us that cost was a barrier to their ability to get an organic certification," said Zach Ducheneaux, administrator of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). "By assisting with the costs, this program can help organic farmers get their certification along with the benefits that come with it."

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent during the 2021 and any subsequent program year. Producers can be reimbursed for expenses made between Oct. 1, 2020 and Sept. 30, 2021 including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

For 2021, OCCSP will reimburse 50% of a certified operation's allowable certification costs, up to a maximum of $500 for each of the following categories (or "scopes"):

- crops
- wild crops
- livestock
- processing/handling
- State organic program fees.

Organic farmers and ranchers may apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency.

This funding will be complemented by an additional $20 million for organic and transitioning producers through the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. More information on that funding will be available in the coming weeks.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the OCCSP webpage, visit usda.gov/organic, or contact your local USDA Service Center.

In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit http://www.usda.gov.

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