



Thinking about Transitioning to a Grassed-Based Dairy?

Dairy farmers wanting to transition from conventional dairy operations to grass-based operations can obtain technical and financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). One of the most important aspects of the transition to a grass-based dairy will be the implementation of a well-developed whole farm plan; the following are brief descriptions of several conservation programs administered by NRCS that dairy farmers may find support in making the transition.

CTA

Conservation Technical Assistance Program:

The CTA Program provides the technical capability, including direct conservation planning, design, and implementation assistance, that helps farmers and ranchers plan and apply conservation on the land. NRCS specialists provide landowners assistance in selecting conservation practices appropriate for the operation's natural resources and farmer's management objectives.

EQIP & AMA

Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Agricultural Management Assistance:

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to install and implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural lands. EQIP conservation practices that may assist dairy farmers in transitioning to grass-based production include, but are not limited to, fencing, watering facilities, pasture and hayland planting, prescribed grazing, grazing land mechanical treatment, and brush removal. AMA* provides financial and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers, and is very similar to EQIP.

*AMA is available in 16 States: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

CSP

Conservation Stewardship Program:

CSP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land.

GRP

Grassland Reserve Program:

GRP is a voluntary easement program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland, and certain other lands and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.

FRPP

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program:

FRPP provides matching funds to governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO) to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. USDA partners with State, Tribal, or local governments and NGOs to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

For more information about conservation programs available from USDA, please contact the local NRCS office serving your area.

Web sites for additional information: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/partners/for_farmers.html ; <http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/publications/index.html>