

NEWS RELEASE

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USDA-NRCS, IFAD and PR Department of Agriculture Partner to Implement Energy & Organic Farming Initiatives

November 22, 2011 – San Juan, PR –NRCS Caribbean Area

Director, Edwin Almodóvar, announces a new cooperative conservation partnership with the Innovation Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in cooperation with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture (PRDA), to increase land user implementation of conservation practices and



Tilling organic row crops in Puerto Rico.

encourage increased participation in the Agency's energy and organic initiatives. NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) funds will provide financial and technical support to cost-effectively conserve Puerto Rico's soil, water and energy resources and increase organic production.

"Outreach is one of the most important tools we have as an agency," said NRCS Caribbean Area Director, Edwin Almodóvar. "A well-informed farmer who participates in our NRCS programs would help us implement conservation and protect our natural resources."

"I believe this essential partnership, will assist the PR Department of Agriculture to provide engineering and administrative services that will help increase soil and water conservation practices. PRDA will also provide outreach services to promote and increase the participation of eligible producers in organic farming and energy conservation initiatives. Our collective goal is to help farmers implement sustainable farming systems by reducing overall farm energy use and improving soil quality for a healthy environment. Program participation will be encouraged through workshops, educational meetings, articles and publications," explained Agronomist Javier Rivera Aquino, PRDA Secretary.

Engineering practices to conserve soil and water include, but are not limited to, sediment and water control basins, stream bank and shoreline protection, grassed waterways, open channels, irrigation water reservoirs, irrigation systems, irrigation water conveyances and pumping plants. The expected benefits from adopting these conservation systems include: reducing contaminant loads to coastal waters, reducing soil erosion and sediment deposition, improving the filtering capacity of riparian areas,

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improving irrigation systems, improving water quantity and quality of the aquifer, and reducing water and energy consumption.

For more information on the NRCS/PRDA partnership to implement soil, water and energy conservation and organic production in Puerto Rico, please contact Mr. José Castro, NRCS Caribbean Area Assistant Director, at 787-766-5206 x226 or Jose.Castro@pr.usda.gov; or Mr. Miguel Santiago, Innovation Fund for Agricultural Development Executive Director, at 787-725-3986.

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