

Applications for NRCS Organic Initiative Due March 30, 2012!

March 6, 2012 – San Juan, PR –USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Edwin Almodóvar reminds potential applicants to contact their local NRCS office soon to find out if they are eligible for the agency’s Organic Initiative. *“Organic farming is a form of agriculture that relies on conservation practices without utilizing synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. It is a production*



Organic peppers growing in the Caribbean Area.

system that sustains the health of soils and relies on the environment to produce healthy crops. In summary, it is a combination of innovation and science. In NRCS, we look forward to working with organic producers to maintain healthy soils and protect our natural resources,” said Director Almodóvar.

Nationwide, NRCS has nearly \$50 million in financial and technical assistance available to certified organic producers, farmers who want to make the transition to organic production, and producers who sell less than \$5,000 in organic products annually. Applications for the second ranking period of 2012 are due at NRCS offices by close of business on March 30, 2012. To find a field office near you, visit our website at www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/ or the NRCS Office Locator at <http://go.usa.gov/Uo8>.

Part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Organic Initiative offers a wide array of conservation practices specifically designed for organic production. *“Practices will help the selected applicants meet many requirements of their USDA Organic System Plans and stay in compliance with USDA’s National Organic Program,”* Director Almodóvar said.

The top five Organic Initiative conservation practices are cover crops, nutrient and pest management, seasonal high tunnels, crop rotation, and fencing. Changes for the 2012 signups include three ranking periods for current and transitioning producers; a threshold ranking score that can speed up approval for qualified applicants; required conservation practices that promote the consistent use of those practices; and an expanded list of conservation activity plans. Learn more about the Organic Initiative at <http://www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip03/Organic.html> or <http://go.usa.gov/Uo9>. Find out about other NRCS initiatives and programs at <http://go.usa.gov/UoX>.

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