

News

Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development Council
702 E. Park Ave.
Plainview, NE 68769
402-582-4866, FAX 402-582-3799
info@northeastrcd.org

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For More Information: Jan Jorgensen, RC&D Coordinator

Nebraska Environmental Trust Funds Organic Training Program

Responding to increased interest in organic farming, the Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council partnered with eight other areas in the state to sponsor a 3-year, statewide education program to help farmers and ranchers transition to organic production. The Organic Farming Statewide project is partially funded through a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Trust is funded by proceeds of the Nebraska Lottery and private donations and has awarded more than \$126 million to conservation projects in Nebraska since 1994.

Spurred by the Organic Transition Incentive offered by the Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and fueled by premium prices (normally double that of commodity grains), many Nebraska farmers and ranchers want to learn more about organic production. But, because organic management requires a systems change rather than a practice adjustment, the organic “unknowns” are keeping farmers from tackling the social and economic risks of transition.

This project is designed to provide the needed information at the local RC&D level from experienced local organic farmers, supported by three organic farming technicians. Farm tours, information meetings, and statewide gatherings will provide farmers the knowledge base and social environment needed to decide if their operation is suited for organic farming.

The nine RC&Ds in the project include: Northeast Nebraska RC&D, Plainview; Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D, Oakland; PrairieLand RC&D, Madison; Nebraska Great Plains RC&D, David City; Five Rivers RC&D, Tecumseh; Trailblazer RC&D Red Cloud; South Central Nebraska RC&D, Doniphan; Loup Basin RC&D, Ord; and Panhandle RC&D, Scottsbluff.

“We recognized the growth of organic farming practices in the state and could see a need for an education program to support this type of agriculture,” says Jan Jorgensen, Northeast Nebraska RC&D Coordinator. To learn more about the program, contact Panhandle RC&D at (308) 632-1311 or Martin Kleinschmit, Project Coordinator at 402-254-6893 or through email at martink@cfra.org.

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