

Contact: Genevieve Backus
Public Affairs Specialist
(443) 482-2911
glbackus@md.usda.gov

NRCS Announces Initiative To Improve Agricultural Energy Efficiency

ANNAPOLIS, Maryland, May 21, 2010— USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) today announced an initiative designed to help Maryland agricultural producers transition to more energy efficient operations. This initiative will make funding available for individual on-farm energy audits designed to save both money and energy when fully implemented.

"Helping Maryland's farmers reduce energy use helps everyone's bottom line," said Jon Hall, NRCS State Conservationist for Maryland. "More efficient energy use will help our agricultural producers become more energy independent."

Maryland is one of 29 states receiving funding for on-farm energy audits in fiscal year 2010 through the 2008 Farm Bill's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The energy audits will be individually tailored to assess each farm's primary energy uses such as milk cooling, heating and cooling of livestock production facilities, and other similar headquarters activities.

NRCS Maryland will help pay for the initial audits and the associated Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP). The AgEMP provides producers a roadmap for future implementation of energy-efficient practices.

Applications are due at local NRCS offices on or before June 18, 2010. If approved for funding, producers will be asked to select an NRCS-certified Technical Service Provider to perform the audit and develop the AgEMP.

"Once an energy plan is developed for a specific farm, the producer may have the opportunity to apply for cost share through EQIP to implement the plan's recommendations in the future," Hall said. "NRCS is providing Maryland's agricultural producers a number of resources to really become energy efficient."

For more information, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center or visit www.md.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

NRCS is celebrating its 75th year of "helping people help the land." Since its inception in 1935, NRCS has worked in partnership with private landowners and a variety of local, state and federal conservation partners to deliver conservation based on specific, local needs.

-NRCS-

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

####

Helping People Help the Land