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ORGANIC FARMERS OFFERED REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTIFICATION COSTS

NASHVILLE — Tennessee farmers who grow organic crops and have become USDA certified can now qualify for a cost share reimbursement for the expense of their certification.

Beginning March 20, 2017, certified organic producers and handlers can apply to USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices for a 75 percent cost share up to a maximum of \$750 to defray costs related to receiving and maintaining organic certification, including inspection costs.

Those interested can apply at 59 FSA field offices across Tennessee. Applicants must submit an application form, W-9 tax form, proof of certification and an itemized invoice of the certification expenses.

Organic certification typically costs small farm producers between \$600 and \$1,000 annually. Costs increase based on product and sales volumes.

This marks a change in the process for those applying for this cost share. Previously, producers would submit applications through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA). Now applicants will work with their local FSA office to receive these funds. Since many producers are already in close contact with their FSA offices for other projects, this will offer them a one-stop shop to easily submit their cost share application.

"The National Organic Certification Cost Share program is such a benefit to producers across Tennessee," TDA organic marketing specialist Greer Gill said. "It helps mitigate the costs of becoming certified, which has a significant impact economically. Farms increase their incomes, their rural communities thrive as a result, and Tennesseans get greater access to the fresh, local products they want."

For more information about USDA organic certification and cost share reimbursement, visit <https://www.tn.gov/agriculture/topic/ag-farms-organics> or contact Greer Gill at (615) 837-5163 or Greer.Gill@tn.gov.

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