NEWS RELEASE

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1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 900, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 900, Portland, OR 97204
www.or.nrcs.usda.gov

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CONTACT:
Loren Unruh, State Programs Leader, (503) 414-3235, loren.unruh@or.usda.gov
Sara Magenheimer, State Public Affairs Officer, (503) 414-3250, sara.magenheimer@or.usda.gov

NRCS Initiatives Offer Financial Assistance for Energy Audits, High Tunnels and Organic Operations

First application period ends February 3, 2012

PORTLAND, Ore. (Nov. 23, 2011) — The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) unveils three initiatives aimed to help producers conserve energy, extend the growing season, and assist organic production; applications for the first ranking period are due by Feb. 3, 2012.

"The On-Farm Energy and Seasonal High Tunnel Initiatives are new to Oregon," said Ron Alvarado, NRCS Oregon State Conservationist. "This is the fourth year for the Organic Initiative, which has been very successful here."

All three initiatives are funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. "These initiatives can help producers implement practices that protect or conserve natural resources," said Alvarado. "For example, discovering ways to save energy on a farm is not only good for the environment, but also good for sustaining farm operations."

The On-Farm Energy Initiative helps producers conserve energy on their agricultural operations. Funds may be used to develop agricultural energy management plans based on energy audits. Funds may also be used to implement recommended energy conservation measures.

The Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative helps producers purchase and erect high tunnels, or hoop houses. The tunnels extend the growing season for high value crops.

The Organic Initiative provides assistance to install conservation practices on agricultural operations that are either certified organic or are working towards organic certification. Funding is available specifically to address natural resource concerns such as soil erosion, water conservation, or plant condition.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis with three cutoff dates to allow for ranking applications: Feb. 3, March 30, and June 1, 2012.

For additional information regarding these initiatives, visit the Oregon NRCS website at: www.or.nrcs.usda.gov.

Interested producers can determine their eligibility and submit an application at their nearest USDA Service Center, listed with federal agencies in the telephone book and posted online at: http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/basindir.html.