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May 13, 2010

NRCS Announces Initiative to Improve Agricultural Energy Conservation, Efficiency

TEMPLE, TEXAS, May 13, 2010 – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial assistance to help agricultural producers in 31 Texas counties 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.

Agricultural producers in Atascosa, Bastrop, Caldwell, Camp, Comanche, Erath, Falls, Fayette, Franklin, Gonzales, Grimes, Hamilton, Henderson, Hopkins, Leon, Limestone, Madison, Milam, Morris, Nacogdoches, Rains, Robertson, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, Walker, Wilson, and Wood counties can sign up at their local NRCS office between May 17 and June 18, 2010.

Payment for the audits will be based on the number of livestock in the operation and will be conducted by a contracted third party of the participant's choice. NRCS will assist with the cost of the audit. Based on the funding Texas received, this will allow for approximately 150 audits to be conducted. Participants in this pilot program will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants will be expected to complete the audit within a year of signing the contract.

The energy audits, offered through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), will be individually tailored to ensure coverage of each farm's primary energy uses, such as milk

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cooling, , heating and cooling of livestock production facilities, manure collection and transfer, grain drying, and similar common on-farm activities.

Implementation will occur in stages beginning with the short-term immediate goal of providing the on-farm energy audits and development of the Agriculture Energy Management Plan (AgEMP) to help identify how the operations can become more energy efficient. Longer term goals will result in the implementation of the recommendations provided in the audit.

Information about how to apply for an energy audit and develop an agriculture energy management plan (AgEMP) is available at <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/agemp/>