

An Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP), commonly called an *on-farm energy audit*, is a valuable tool that helps you understand how energy is used on your farm. It provides guidance that can help you prioritize actions and plan equipment upgrades that improve energy efficiency.

Improved energy efficiency usually translates into increased savings of fuel and electricity. It may provide additional benefits such as improved livestock comfort and increased safety for workers.

Specifically, the AgEMP separates farm energy use into specific groups by evaluating your equipment against your actual utility and fuel invoices. The farm residence energy use is excluded even though it may share the same meter as the barn and other farm outbuildings.

The AgEMP is not a feasibility study for the installation of renewable energy sources like solar, wind, or biofuels, nor is it a simple assessment like those found in on-line tools.

There are two types of AgEMP's:

- Headquarters (Code 122) analyzes farm buildings (lighting, insulation, ventilation, water system, heating) and equipment (make, model, size, and runtime) used around the farmstead.
- Landscape (Code 124) analyzes agronomic operations (crop/pasture management, forestry practices, manure handling, irrigation, and other farming activities).

Energy conservation – using less energy

Energy efficiency – the same output for less energy, or an increased output for the same amount of energy input.

Completing an AgEMP will take about four to six hours of your time working with an energy auditor to inventory equipment and operations and to discuss the completed report.

Landscape AgEMPs may require more time depending on the complexity and diversity of your operation.

EQIP contracts for an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP)

- Any producer eligible for EQIP may apply for AgEMP funding through NRCS.
- An AgEMP contract is like any other EQIP contract, except that it is exclusively for an AgEMP.
- One AgEMP contract may include multiple farming enterprises and tracts as separate line items.
- You can apply for an AgEMP even if you have an existing EQIP contract on the same farm.
- Application for an EQIP AgEMP can be submitted at anytime, however approval periods are announced each year. Your NRCS field staff can provide the dates.
- An EQIP AgEMP must be completed by a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP). TSP's submit their qualifications, resumes, and sample plans to NRCS for review prior to certification.
- There is no requirement that you must implement recommendations made in the AgEMP. However, funding may be available for recommended upgrades through another EQIP contract.

Once your NRCS field office notifies you that your contract is approved, here is what you need to do:

- Ask the field office for a list of Technical Service Providers (TSP's) certified to complete AgEMP's in your state. Or, find one on TechReg <http://techreg.usda.gov/>. Be sure that the TSP is certified for the AgEMP type (Headquarters or Landscape) in your contract.
- Select and call a TSP. Discuss contract terms, conditions, scheduling, and personnel. Expect to sign an agreement and provide payment information. The agreement is between you and the TSP, not the TSP and NRCS.
- Take time to read the criteria for your AgEMP so that you have a clear understanding of what the TSP is being hired to do and why.
- Your agreement with the TSP should specify that the final AgEMP report provided to you by the TSP must meet NRCS criteria prior to payment.
- Gather your utility bills for a 12 month period. Your utility suppliers and fuel dealer can help you. This information is critical. Without it the AgEMP will not meet the NRCS AgEMP criteria.
- Jot down some notes about your equipment and buildings, and any plans that you have made for improvements. Plan on a discussion of this with your TSP.
- Make sure you thoroughly review the completed AgEMP report with your TSP and understand the information.
- Ask the TSP to email a copy of the report directly to your NRCS field office/conservation planner. You may have to provide the email address to the TSP.
- The EQIP contract payment will be made once NRCS has a copy of the AgEMP and it has been determined that it meets NRCS AgEMP criteria.

What information can you expect to receive from an AgEMP?

An AgEMP examines current energy use on the farm by using an inventory of the major activities and by separating utility bills into specific groups.

Recommendations for energy saving upgrades are made based on the inventory of systems and equipment. The estimated cost of upgrades with the payback period are summarized in the report. Estimates of potential reductions of emissions are also included.

More information is available from your local NRCS staff at a nearby USDA Field Service Center.

Or, refer to the NRCS EQIP Energy Initiative:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/?&cid=stelprdb1046252>

Information is also available from *SaveEnergy*, on the Innovation for U.S. Dairy website:

<http://www.usdairy.com/saveenergy>