

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan recently announced a new pilot project under the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” initiative for farmers to establish high tunnels—also known as hoop houses—to increase the availability of locally grown produce in a conservation-friendly way.

Merrigan and other Obama administration officials highlighted opportunities available for producers in a video posted on USDA’s YouTube channel which shows high tunnels recently installed in the White House garden.

The three-year, 38-state study will verify if high tunnels are effective in reducing pesticide use, keeping vital nutrients in the soil, extending the growing season, increasing yields, and providing other benefits to growers.

Made of ribs of plastic or metal pipe covered with a layer of plastic sheeting, high tunnels are easy to build, maintain and move. High tunnels are used year-round in parts of the country, providing steady incomes to farmers—a significant advantage to owners of small farms, limited-resource farmers and organic producers.

To sign up or learn more about EQIP assistance for high tunnel projects, contact a local NRCS office.