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USDA Extends Deadline to Apply for Pandemic Assistance to Livestock Producers with Animal Losses

Farm Service Agency Reminds Producers of Upcoming Pandemic Program Deadlines

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing additional time for livestock and poultry producers to apply for the [Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (PLIP). Producers who suffered losses during the pandemic due to insufficient access to processing may now apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals through Oct. 12, 2021, rather than the original deadline of Sept. 17, 2021. PLIP is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative.

PLIP provides payments to producers for losses of livestock or poultry depopulated from March 1, 2020 through Dec. 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. Payments are based on 80% of the fair market value of the livestock and poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animal. Eligible livestock and poultry include swine, chickens and turkeys.

PLIP Program Details

PLIP payments are calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible livestock or poultry by the payment rate per head, and then subtracting the amount of any payments the eligible livestock or poultry owner has received for disposal of the livestock or poultry under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or a state program. The payments will also be reduced by any Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 1 and 2) payments paid on the same inventory of swine that were depopulated.

Eligible livestock and poultry producers can apply for PLIP through the Oct. 12, 2021 deadline by completing the FSA-620, Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program application, and submitting it to any Farm Service Agency county office. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/plip more information on how to apply.

Additional Pandemic Assistance

Other programs within the Pandemic Assistance for Producer initiative with upcoming deadlines include:

- Oct. 12 - [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#), which provides critical support to agricultural producers impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions.
- Oct. 15 – [Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers](#), which provides financial relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that experienced losses in 2020 due to COVID-19.

To learn more about USDA's commitment to delivery of financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers and businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions, visit farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance.

USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records

Access your land information in real time

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new

enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll will need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit [farmers.gov](#) and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).

USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option

If you're a historically underserved producer and participating in the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), you can receive an advance conservation practice payment before you implement a practice.

A [historically underserved producer](#) is described as one of the below:

- **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** – is new to farming or ranching, or, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years.
 - **Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** – is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of that group without regard to their individual qualities.
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- **Veteran Farmer or Rancher** – has served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm or ranch, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years, or first obtained veteran status during the last 10 years.
- **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher** – has a household income at or below the national poverty level. Eligibility can be determined by using [this online tool](#).

Under the advance payment option, such producers may request payments when they have final designs and job sheets and are ready to begin their EQIP practices. Advance payments provide at least 50 percent of the payment rate for each practice. The funds must be spent within 90 days of receipt and practices must be completed as agreed to in an EQIP plan of operations. Producers also may opt to have NRCS pay the contractors or vendors directly.

For more information, visit the [advance payments](#) webpage where you can download the [EQIP Advance Payment Fact Sheet](#).

USDA Accepts More than 2.5 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup

USDA surpasses goal with more than 5.3 million acres enrolled through CRP signups in 2021

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has accepted offers for more than 2.5 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners for enrollment through this year's Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Signup. This is double last year's enrollment and brings the total acres enrolled across all CRP signups in 2021 to more than 5.3 million acres, surpassing USDA's 4-million-acre goal. Producers and landowners submitted offers for nearly 4 million acres in Grassland CRP, the highest in the signup's history.

Alabama producers enrolled 842 acres through this year's Grassland CRP signup. Through Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can conserve grasslands, rangelands, and pastures, while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing, or harvesting seed from the enrolled land, pursuant to approved conservation plans designed to promote thoughtful use while creating and maintaining vital habitat.

Updates to Grassland CRP

FSA rolled out a number of updates to its CRP signups earlier this year. This included setting a minimum payment rate for Grassland CRP as well as establishing new national priority zones.

Producers enrolled 1.1 million acres in the two priority zones, which include the Greater Yellowstone Elk Migratory Corridor, which is focused on wildlife and includes counties in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, and the Historical Dust Bowl Region, which still is at great risk of high wind erosion and includes counties in Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. The two national priority areas adjoin or include habitat ranges of the lesser prairie-chicken and sage grouse, both of which are part of larger USDA wildlife habitat initiatives.

Download the ["What's New" fact sheet](#) to learn more about CRP updates.

CRP and Climate Change Mitigation

Additionally, lands enrolled in CRP – including grasslands – play an important role in addressing climate change. For example, this enrollment of more than 2.5 million acres of grazing land into Grassland CRP will mitigate an additional estimated 22,000 metric tons of CO2 equivalent.

By the Numbers

In addition to the more than 2.5 million acres enrolled in Grassland CRP, almost 1.9 million acres in offers were accepted through the General CRP Signup and 902,000 acres were accepted so far through the Continuous Signup. Additional enrollment information on the General and Continuous signups is available in the [Aug. 23, 2021 news release](#).

The 2018 Farm Bill established a nationwide acreage limit for CRP, with the total number of acres that may be enrolled capped at 25 million acres in fiscal year (FY) 2021 and growing to 27 million by FY 2023. Currently, 20.6 million acres are enrolled. With more than 5.3 million acres accepted for enrollment, the USDA will start 2022 off with about 22.9 million acres, leaving room for further enrollment and program expansion up to the FY 2022 cap of 25.5 million.

More Information

For more information on Grassland CRP or any other CRP program, contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Lenders Can Now Apply for New Heirs' Property Relending Program

Intermediary lenders can now apply for loans through the new Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting applications today through October 29, 2021, and cooperatives, credit unions and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to apply for these competitive loans, which ultimately will help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues.

Through HPRP, FSA loans up to \$5 million at a 1% interest rate to eligible lenders. Then, those eligible lenders will reloan funds to heirs to help resolve title issues by financing the purchase or consolidation of property interests and financing costs associated with a succession plan.

How to Apply

Intermediary lenders should apply by the October 29, 2021 deadline using the [HPRP application form \(FSA-2637\)](#), which can be submitted to FSA by mail:

FSA Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs
Loan Making Division
STOP 0522
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Additionally, FSA will host a webinar on September 15 at 2 p.m. ET for interested lenders, who can register or learn more on the [FSA Outreach and Education webpage](#).

Eligible Lenders

Intermediary lenders must:

- be certified as a community development financial institution, and
- have experience and capability in making and servicing agricultural and commercial loans that are similar in nature.

If applications exceed the amount of available funds, FSA will prioritize applicants that both:

- have at least 10 years or more of experience with socially disadvantaged farmers; and
- are located in states that have adopted a statute consisting of enactment or adoption of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA). A list of these states is available at [gov/heirs/relending](https://www.farmers.gov/heirs/relending).

More Information

[Frequently asked questions](#) (including those in Spanish, Thai and Chinese), the [August 3, 2021 overview webinar](#), and other resources can be found on [farmers.gov/heirs/relending](https://www.farmers.gov/heirs/relending).

After the loans are announced, USDA will distribute information for heirs on how to apply. Information for heirs is also on [farmers.gov/heirs/relending](https://www.farmers.gov/heirs/relending).

Food Plots Bring a Variety of Wildlife to Farms

Food for wildlife can be scarce during the winter. And many landowners are using food plots to provide food for them during the colder months. A food plot adds plant diversity, food and cover to the landscape. It can be particularly useful for providing a winter or early spring food source. Where fall plowing buries the majority of crop residue, food plots are an excellent choice to encourage wildlife survival. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service works with many landowners to provide technical assistance, and in some cases financial assistance, to establish food plots on their land.

Legume-based, perennial food plots, for instance, may supplement the energy needs for big game species, such as white-tail deer, during times of the year when there are few available sources to eat. In most cases, food plots are also tied to planting pollinator habitat, native warm-season grasses and tree planting for cover.

The different components of a wildlife management plan help tie all the missing pieces of the puzzle together for a landowner, helping to meet their individual farm goals for wildlife management. As an added benefit, these new habitat acres have a ripple effect, bringing more and more wildlife to the surrounding areas.

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [nrcs.usda.gov](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Conservation Planning Helps Improve Farm Productivity

Whether you rent or own your land, a conservation plan is critical to maintain and improve farm productivity. Plans of any kind are important as they set goals and outline how to reach them. Conservation plans are roadmaps for improving your operation while conserving natural resources. They provide proven strategies that landowners can use to solve identified natural resource concerns and take advantage of conservation opportunities.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service can help you develop a conservation plan. This technical assistance from NRCS is free, and it can help you reduce soil loss from erosion, solve issues with soil, air and water quality, reduce potential damage from excess water and drought, enhance the quality of wildlife habitat, address waste management concerns, and improve the long-term sustainability of the country's natural resources.

How does conservation planning work? You'll meet with a planner from NRCS for a science-based evaluation of your problems and opportunities on your land. The NRCS staff member, often a district conservationist or conservation planning technician, then analyzes the findings and recommends the best strategies to address your problems and achieve valuable opportunities.

If you're interested in conservation planning, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit nrcs.usda.gov.

Filter Strips Capture Nutrients & Sediment at Edge of Farm Fields

Healthy soil and plentiful nutrients are key ingredients to productive farms and ranches. But when they move off farms and ranches, they can harm streams and rivers. High concentrations of nutrients in

water, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, can be harmful to humans, animals and plants. When the runaway nutrients reach estuaries, they can lead to hypoxic zones, or oxygen-depleted waters.

You can take proactive steps to keep nutrients and soil in their proper places – on the land and out of waterways. Many producers implement filter strips – a belt of plants – at the edge of crop fields and pastures. Producers station these strips in environmentally sensitive areas on a farm or ranch, especially near ditches and other waterways. The strips slow the speed of water flowing over fields following a rainstorm, allowing for the plants to capture sediment and nutrients. The best plants for filter strips have stiff stems and are dense near the ground.

Filter strips not only help the environment, but they can help the producer, too. They provide habitat for wildlife and pollinators. It's always helpful to lure pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, to a farm because the more pollinators – the better the harvest.

NRCS can help you incorporate conservation practices like filter strips on your farm or ranch. For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit nrcs.usda.gov.

No-till Leads to Healthier Soil, Cleaner Water

In the minds of many, a freshly tilled field is picturesque – cleaned and ordered for the next planting. But we've learned from studying soil that heavy tillage isn't good. When soil is heavily tilled, the stalks and leaves remaining from the previous crop are chopped, disturbing the top several inches of soil. This "fluffing" action allows for better seed placement according to some, but soil scientists say not tilling leads to healthier, more drought-resistant soil.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and other groups recommend producers to not till and leave the stalks and leaves, called residue, in place. By not tilling, soil organic matter is enhanced, increasing water infiltration and reducing erosion. No-till is a conservation practice that leaves the crop residue undisturbed from harvest.

Any tillage causes a flush of organic matter decomposition, resulting in loss of soil carbon. Tillage also breaks up soil aggregates, which are important for water infiltration, providing oxygen to plant roots, and reducing erosion.

Healthy soils cycle water and nutrients more efficiently. And they function better, enabling them to buffer against extreme drought and flooding. Plus, they reduce soil loss into waterways, which can cause problems for water quality.

Good management of field residue can increase efficiency of irrigation and control erosion. No-till can be used for many crops in almost any soil and can save producers labor costs and fuel. It's a sound investment for the environment and the farm.

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit nrcs.usda.gov.



NASS to send 2021 Hemp Acreage and Production survey this fall

This October, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will mail its first **Hemp Acreage and Production Survey**. The survey will collect information on the total planted and harvested area, yield, production, and value of hemp in the United States.

The Domestic Hemp Production Program established in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) allows for the cultivation of hemp under certain conditions. The Hemp Acreage and Production survey will provide needed data about the hemp industry to assist producers, regulatory agencies, state governments, processors, and other key industry entities.

Producers may complete the survey online at agcounts.usda.gov or they may complete and return the survey by mail using the return envelope provided.

Learn more about the survey at nass.usda.gov/go/hemp.



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