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Availability of Low-Interest Physical Loss Loans for Producers Affected by Natural Disasters

Physical loss loans can help producers repair or replace damaged or destroyed physical property essential to the success of the agricultural operation, including livestock losses. Examples of property commonly affected include essential farm buildings, fixtures to real estate, equipment, livestock, perennial crops, fruit and nut bearing trees and harvested or stored crops and hay.

State: Arizona

Triggering Disaster: Wildfire that occurred June 1, 2021 and continuing.

Application Deadline: Feb. 28, 2022

Primary Counties Eligible: Gila and Pinal

Contiguous Counties also Eligible: Coconino, Graham, Maricopa, Navajo, Pima and Yavapai

More Resources

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a

Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Designates Maricopa County, Arizona, as a Primary Natural Disaster Area

This Secretarial natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through [emergency loans](#). Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinance of certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

Impacted Area: Arizona

Triggering Disaster Event: Rain, flash floods and winds that occurred from August 1 through August 13, 2021.

Application Deadline: May 13, 2022

Primary County Eligible: Maricopa

Contiguous Counties Also Eligible: Gila, La Paz, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai and Yuma

More Resources

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Builds Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses to agricultural producers who are certified organic or transitioning to organic. USDA will make \$20 million available through the new [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program \(OTECP\)](#) as part of USDA's broader [Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative](#), which provides new, broader and more equitable opportunities for farmers, ranchers and producers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, certified organic and transitional operations faced challenges due to loss of markets, and increased costs and labor shortages, in addition to costs related to obtaining or renewing their organic certification, which producers and handlers of conventionally grown commodities do not incur. Transitional operations also faced the financial challenge of implementing practices required to obtain organic certification without

being able to obtain the premium prices normally received for certified organic commodities.

Eligible Expenses

OTTECP funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Certified operations and transitional operations may apply for OTTECP for eligible expenses paid during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. For each year, OTTECP covers 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category (crop, livestock, wild crop, handling and State Organic Program fee). This includes application fees, inspection fees, USDA organic certification costs, state organic program fees and more.

Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. This includes fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan.

For both certified operations and transitional operations, OTTECP covers 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the expense of soil testing required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

Applying for Assistance

Signup for 2020 and 2021 OTTECP will be Nov. 8, 2021, through Jan. 7, 2022. Producers apply through their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office and can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364. Visit farmers.gov/ottec to learn more.

Additional Organic Support

OTTECP builds upon USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) which provides cost share assistance of 50%, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope, to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the NOP. This year's application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021.

Additionally, USDA's Risk Management Agency announced improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Program including increasing expansion limits for organic producers to the higher of \$500,000 or 35%. Previously, small and medium size organic operations were held to the same 35% limit to expansion as conventional practice producers. Also, producers can now report acreage as certified organic, or as acreage in transition to organic, when the producer has requested an organic certification by the acreage reporting date.

To learn more about USDA's assistance for organic producers, visit usda.gov/organic.

As USDA looks for long-term solutions to build back a better food system, the Department is committed to delivery of financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers and businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Since USDA

rolled out the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative in March, the Department has provided support to America's farmers and ranchers including:

- \$18 billion in [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#) payments, including a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers since the program reopened in April 2021.
- Over \$35 million in assistance for those who had to depopulate livestock and poultry due to insufficient processing access ([Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program](#)).
- Over \$7 million to date for the logging and log hauling industry ([Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers](#)). Final payments are being calculated to be disbursed soon.
- \$1 billion to [purchase healthy food for food insecure Americans and build food bank capacity](#).
- \$350 million in [additional dairy assistance related to market volatility](#).
- [\\$500 million deployed through existing USDA programs](#).

For more details, please visit www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance.

USDA Accepting Applications for FY 2022 to Protect Privately-Owned Wetlands, Agricultural Lands and Grasslands in Arizona

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced an application deadline for eligible entities to apply for the fiscal year 2022 funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

The [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) is USDA's premier conservation easement program, helping landowners protect working agricultural lands and wetlands.

The goal of ACEP is to protect land devoted to food production and wildlife habitat from being converted to non-agricultural uses and to restore wetlands. ACEP is a voluntary program for landowners and Tribal governments that leave a conservation heritage for their family and community. Landowners have easement options between the Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) or Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE).

The Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) component protects the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive croplands and grasslands to non-agricultural uses.

The Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE) component restores wetlands to:

- provide habitat for wildlife (including threatened and endangered species)
- improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals
- reduce flooding

- recharge groundwater
- protect biological diversity

Landowners are compensated for enrolling their land in easements. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private and Tribal landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of conservation easements. Eligible landowners may choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

NRCS staff and Partners will work with applicants to help them with the application process. Eligible entities are encouraged to apply for program agreements and work with landowners to help them through the application process for ACEP-ALE and provide one-on-one assistance to create the conservation easement that works best for their farming or ranching operation.

NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis. The deadline to apply for funding opportunity in Arizona for this year is **Friday, December 10, 2021**.

For more information about the sign-up and program, please visit [Arizona's ACEP website](#) or contacting Devon Cunningham at (602) 280-8804 or Devon.Cunningham@usda.gov.

NRCS Announces Conservation Funding Opportunities for FY 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced fiscal year 2022 assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and private landowners for conservation programs, such as the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) and the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#).

While USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) accepts applications for these programs year-round, producers and landowners should apply by the dates listed below to be considered for this funding period. Applications received after these dates will automatically be deferred to the next funding period.

FY2022 Application Deadlines for Arizona

- [EQIP](#), **Dec. 17, 2021**
- [CSP](#), **Feb. 11, 2022**
- [RCPP - CAGCS/NAGL](#), **Feb. 11, 2022**

Through conservation programs, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

Producers, landowners and forest managers interested in applying for assistance should contact the NRCS at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

Farmers and ranchers can use the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will receive information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

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



Arizona / FPAC USDA

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Arizona Farm Service Agency

Phoenix Office: 602-285-6300

Arizona Natural Resource Conservation Service

Phoenix Office: 602-280-8801

Risk Management Agency

Davis, CA Office: 530-792-5870