

August 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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SED's Comments

We are here to serve you and continue to be open for business - USDA Service Centers in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and CNMI continue to serve our valued customers without interruption through these tough times. Our program delivery staff are available to producers in person, by phone, by email, and via other online tools. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct in-person business should call ahead to confirm the office's status and make an appointment before visiting. Visitors will be pre-screened based on health concerns or recent travel and must adhere to social distancing guidelines. For your safety and ours, visitors may also be required to wear a face covering during their appointment if local government authorities requires the wear of face masks in public spaces. Please visit farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status to see the operational status of your local service center.

AL Frenzel, State Executive Director
USDA Farm Service Agency Hawaii & Pacific Basin

Hawaii & Pacific Basin FSA State Office

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300 Ala Moana Blvd, Rm 5-108
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USDA Investigates Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China

USDA is aware that people across the country have received suspicious, unsolicited packages of seed that appear to be coming from China. USDA's Animal and

Phone: 808-541-2600 x 2
FAX: 855-356-9493

State Executive Director:
AL Frenzel

Chief Program Specialist:
Patrick Lewis

Chief, Farm Loan Program:
Theresa Correa

Upcoming County Committee Meetings:

Hawaii State Committee
September 17, 2020 at 9:00 am

Hawaii County Committee
September 11, 2020 at 8:30 am

Honolulu County Committee
August 21, 2020 at 3:00pm

Maui County Committee
August 20, 2020 at 8:30 am

Kauai County Committee
August 19, 2020 at 9:00 am

Guam County Committee
September 10, 2020 at 9:00 am

CNMI County Committee
September 11, 2020 at 9:00am

Contact the County Office to confirm meeting date and time, as budget constraints may limit the County Committee's ability to meet each month.

Click here for a list of County Offices, contact numbers and addresses: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Hawaii/service-centers/index>

Website for Hawaii and Pacific Basin FSA: www.fsa.usda.gov/hi

Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, other federal agencies, and State departments of agriculture to investigate the situation.

USDA urges anyone who receives an unsolicited package of seeds to immediately contact their [State plant regulatory official](#) or [APHIS State plant health director](#). Please hold onto the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label, until someone from your State department of agriculture or APHIS contacts you with further instructions. **Do not plant seeds from unknown origins.**

At this time, we don't have any evidence indicating this is something other than a "brushing scam" where people receive unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost sales. USDA is currently collecting seed packages from recipients and will test their contents and determine if they contain anything that could be of concern to U.S. agriculture or the environment.

USDA is committed to preventing the unlawful entry of prohibited seeds and protecting U.S. agriculture from invasive pests and noxious weeds. Visit the [APHIS' website](#) to learn more about USDA's efforts to stop agricultural smuggling and promote trade compliance.

Enrollment Period Begins for USDA's Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that the enrollment period for the [Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program \(RTCP\)](#) for fiscal year 2020 began July 13 and will run through Sept. 4.

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2020, reauthorized RTCP and allows farmers and ranchers in Alaska, Hawaii and insular areas including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin Islands of the United States, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau, to recover any costs to transport agricultural commodities or inputs used to produce an agricultural commodity.

RTCP payments are calculated based on the costs incurred for transportation of the agricultural commodity or inputs during a 12-month period, subject to an \$8,000 per producer cap per fiscal year. If claims for payments exceed the funds available from the

program for a fiscal year, payments will be reduced on a pro-rata basis.

Farmers and ranchers interested in participating in RTCP can obtain applications and other documents by calling toll-free 1-866-794-1079.

To find your FSA county office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Additional Commodities Eligible for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced an initial list of additional commodities that have been added to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), and that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made other adjustments to the program based on comments received from agricultural producers and organizations and review of market data. Producers will be able to submit applications that include these commodities on Monday, July 13, 2020. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting through Aug. 28, 2020, applications for CFAP, which helps offset price declines and additional marketing costs because of the coronavirus pandemic. USDA expects additional eligible commodities to be announced in the coming weeks.

USDA collected comments and supporting data for consideration of additional commodities through June 22, 2020.

Changes to CFAP include:

- Adding the following commodities: alfalfa sprouts, anise, arugula, basil, bean sprouts, beets, blackberries, Brussels sprouts, celeriac (celery root), chives, cilantro, coconuts, collard greens, dandelion greens, greens (others not listed separately), guava, kale greens, lettuce – including Boston, green leaf, Lolla Rossa, oak leaf green, oak leaf red and red leaf – marjoram, mint, mustard, okra, oregano, parsnips, passion fruit, peas (green), pineapple, pistachios, radicchio, rosemary, sage, savory, sorrel, fresh sugarcane, Swiss chard, thyme and turnip top greens.
- Expanding for seven currently eligible commodities – apples, blueberries, garlic, potatoes, raspberries, tangerines and taro – CARES Act funding for sales losses because USDA found these commodities had a 5 percent or greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, these commodities were only eligible for marketing adjustments.
- Determining that peaches and rhubarb no longer qualify for payment under the CARES Act sales loss category.
- Correcting payment rates for apples, artichokes, asparagus, blueberries, cantaloupes, cucumbers, garlic, kiwifruit, mushrooms, papaya, peaches, potatoes, raspberries, rhubarb, tangerines and taro.

Additional details can be found in the Federal Register in the [Notice of Funding Availability \(NOFA\)](#) and [Final Rule Correction](#) and at www.farmers.gov/cfap.

Producers have several options for applying to the CFAP program:

- Using an online portal, accessible at gov/cfap, allows producers with secure USDA login credentials—known as eAuthentication—to certify eligible commodities online, digitally sign applications and submit directly to the local USDA Service Center. New commodities will be available in the system on July 13, 2020.
- Completing the application form using our CFAP Application Generator and Payment Calculator found at gov/cfap. This Excel workbook allows customers to input information

specific to their operation to determine estimated payments and populate the application form, which can be printed, then signed and submitted to their local USDA Service Center. An updated version with the new commodities will be available on the website on July 13, 2020.

- Downloading the AD-3114 application form from gov/cfap and manually completing the form to submit to the local USDA Service Center by mail, electronically or by hand delivery to an office drop box. In some limited cases, the office may be open for in-person business by appointment. Visit farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status to check the status of your local office.

USDA Service Centers can also work with producers to complete and securely transmit digitally signed applications through two commercially available tools: Box and OneSpan. Producers who are interested in digitally signing their applications should notify their local service centers when calling to discuss the CFAP application process. You can learn more about these solutions at farmers.gov/mydocs.

Getting Help from FSA

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap. For existing FSA customers, these documents are likely already on file.

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your [County USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup

USDA has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes,

floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops were damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus, and more information on WHIP+ can be found at farmers.gov/whip-plus.

August 2020 Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans	1.375%
Farm Operating Microloans	1.375%
Farm Ownership Loans	2.375%
Farm Ownership Microloans	2.375%
Farm Ownership Loans Direct Down Payment for Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	2.375%

Sign Up Today for Text Alerts from FSA

Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) farmers and ranchers now can receive notifications from their county office through text messages on their cell phone.

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Producers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Producers can text the **short codes** below to FSANOW (372-669) to subscribe to text message alerts from their respective counties. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Hawaii County : **HPBHawaii**
Honolulu County: **HPBHonolulu**
Kauai County: **HPBKauai**
Maui County: **HPBMaui**

Please contact your [local FSA office](#) if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the text message option.

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Maui County: **HPBMaui**

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).

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