

April 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Illinois FSA Newsletter

Illinois Farm Service Agency

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www.fsa.usda.gov/il

To All County FSA Service Center Visitors

U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Centers are encouraging visitors to take proactive protective measures to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

As part of our commitment to farmers and ranchers, USDA Service Centers will continue to be open for business by phone appointment only and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing.

State Executive Director:

William J. Graff

While our FSA and NRCS program delivery staff at the Service Centers will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our producers by phone, and using online tools whenever possible.

State Committee:

James Reed-Chairperson
Melanie DeSutter-Member
Kirk Kiefer-Member
George Obernagel III-Member
Troy Uphoff-Member

Producers can find their Service Center's phone number at farmers.gov/service-center-locator and more information about Coronavirus and USDA and USDA Service Centers at <https://farmers.gov/coronavirus>.

Administrative Officer

Dan Puccetti

William J. Graff
State Executive Director

Division Chiefs

Vicki Donaldson
John Gehrke
Natalie Prince
Randy Tillman

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/il

Check out

<https://www.farmers.gov/> for information about ALL the programs available through your local USDA Service Center FSA and NRCS offices, including county office locations, agriculture statistics, loan interest rates and much more!

Learn about Risk Management Agency's crop insurance programs at <https://cropinsurance101.org/>

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for IL Farmers Hurt by 2018, 2019 Disasters

Agricultural producers affected by natural disasters in 2018 and 2019 can apply through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). Sign-up for this U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program began Sept. 11.

WHIP+ Eligibility

WHIP+ will be available for eligible producers who have suffered eligible losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only).

Disaster losses must have been a result of hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires that occurred in 2018 or 2019. Also, producers in counties that did not receive a disaster declaration or designation may still apply for WHIP+ but must provide supporting documentation to establish that the crops were directly affected by a qualifying disaster loss.

A list of counties that received qualifying disaster declarations and designations is available at farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus. Because grazing and livestock losses, other than milk losses, are covered by other disaster recovery programs offered through FSA, those losses are not eligible for WHIP+.

Eligible crops include those for which federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage is available, excluding crops intended for grazing. A list of crops covered by crop insurance is available through USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) Actuarial Information Browser at webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/actuarialinformationbrowser.

The WHIP+ payment factor ranges from 75 percent to 95 percent, depending on the level of crop insurance coverage or NAP coverage that a producer obtained for the crop. Producers who did not insure their crops in 2018 or 2019 will receive 70 percent of the expected value of the crop. Insured crops (either crop insurance or NAP coverage) will receive between 75 percent and 95 percent of expected value; those who purchased the highest levels of coverage will receive 95-percent of the expected value.

At the time of sign-up, producers will be asked to provide verifiable and reliable production records. If a producer is unable to provide production records, WHIP+ payments will be determined based on the lower of either the actual loss certified by the producer and determined acceptable by FSA or the county expected yield and county disaster yield. The county disaster yield is the production that a producer would have been expected to make based on the eligible disaster conditions in the county.

WHIP+ payments for 2018 disasters will be eligible for 100 percent of their calculated value. WHIP+ payments for 2019 disasters will be limited to an initial 50 percent of their calculated value, with an opportunity to receive up to the remaining 50 percent after January 1, 2020, if sufficient funding remains.

Both insured and uninsured producers are eligible to apply for WHIP+. But all producers receiving WHIP+ payments will be required to purchase crop insurance or NAP, at the 60 percent coverage level or higher, for the next two available, consecutive crop years after the crop year for which WHIP+ payments were paid. Producers who fail to purchase crop insurance for the next two applicable, consecutive years will be required to pay back the WHIP+ payment.

Additional information about WHIP+ program eligibility and payment limitations can be found at farmers.gov/recover.

Additional Loss Coverage

The Milk Loss Program will provide payments to eligible dairy operations for milk that was dumped or removed without compensation from the commercial milk market because of a qualifying 2018 and 2019 natural disaster. Producers who suffered losses of harvested commodities, including hay, stored in on-farm structures in 2018 and 2019 will receive assistance through the On-Farm Storage Loss Program.

Additionally, producers with trees, bushes or vines can receive both cost-share assistance through FSA's Tree Assistance Program (TAP) for the cost of replanting and rehabilitating eligible trees and WHIP+ will provide payments based on the loss value of the tree, bush or vine itself. Therefore, eligible producers may receive both a TAP and a 2017 WHIP or WHIP+ payment for the same acreage. In addition, TAP policy has been updated to assist eligible orchardists or nursery tree growers of pecan trees with a tree mortality rate that exceeds 7.5 percent (adjusted for normal mortality) but is less than 15 percent (adjusted for normal mortality) for losses incurred during 2018.

Prevented Planting

Agricultural producers faced significant challenges planting crops in 2019 in many parts of the country. All producers with flooding or excess moisture-related prevented planting insurance claims in calendar year 2019 will receive a prevented planting supplemental disaster ("bonus") payment equal to 10 percent of their prevented planting indemnity, plus an additional 5 percent will be provided to those who purchased harvest price option coverage.

As under 2017 WHIP, WHIP+ will provide prevented planting assistance to uninsured producers, NAP producers and producers who may have been prevented from planting an insured crop in the 2018 crop year and those 2019 crops that had a final planting date prior to January 1, 2019.

For more information on FSA disaster assistance programs, please contact your local [USDA service center](#) or visit farmers.gov/recover. For all available USDA disaster assistance programs, go to [USDA's disaster resources website](#).

Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran or Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

CRP contract holders are encouraged to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the landowner or operator for up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires, provided the transition is not to a family member.

Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis through 2023 or until the new statutory limit of \$50 million under the 2018 Farm Bill is reached.

CRP contract holders no longer need to be a retired or retiring owner or operator to transition their land. TIP participants must agree to sell, have a contract to sell, or agree to lease long term (at least five years) land enrolled in an expiring CRP contract to a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who is not a family member.

Beginning, veteran or social disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning two years before the expiration date of the CRP contract.

For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2022, the land may be offered for enrollment in TIP from October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2022. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands.

New landowners or renters that return the land to production must use sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information on TIP, visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation>.

CSP Signup for 2020 Begins

The 2018 Farm Bill made several changes to this critical conservation program, which helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm to the next level. CSP continues to be a very effective tool for private landowners working to achieve their conservation and management goals. The deadline for [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2020 is May 29, 2020. While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 29, 2020, to ensure their applications are considered for 2020 funding.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes NRCS to obligate new CSP contracts from now until 2023, while making some important improvements to the program. These updates include:

- NRCS now enrolls eligible, high-ranking applications based on available dollars rather than acres. For fiscal year 2020, Illinois NRCS can spend up to \$10 million for new CSP contracts, which covers part of the cost for producers to implement new conservation activities and maintain their existing activities for the five-year contract period.
- Higher payment rates are now available for certain conservation activities, including cover crops and supplemental payments for resource-conserving crop rotations and advanced grazing management systems.

CSP now provides specific support for activities on organic operations and those transitioning to organic production.

CSP is offered in Illinois through a continuous sign-up. The program provides many benefits including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements, and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands, including cropland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land.

For additional information about CSP, contact your [local USDA service center](#). Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, producers may set up phone appointments with their local NRCS office if they have any questions or need information.

Sign In/Sign Up!

Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers have new online options to access U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs. Through USDA's new streamlined process, producers doing business **as an individual** can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) on the secure and convenient farmers.gov. Producers doing business as an individual first need to sign up for the Level 2 eAuthentication access. Currently USDA eAuthentication does not have the mechanism to issue accounts to businesses, corporations, other entities or for anyone acting on behalf of another individual or entity.

- Step 1: Create an online account at www.eauth.usda.gov
- Step 2: Complete identity verification by either using the online self-service identity verification method or by completing the identity verification in-person at your USDA Service Center.
- Step 3: You're enrolled
- Step 4: Contact your local USDA Service Center to have your new Level 2 account linked with your USDA customer record
- Step 5: You're ready to Log In

Or go to your local USDA Service Center and our support staff will help you sign up for Level 2 Access right in the office! They will get you online so you can create an online account at <https://farmers.gov/sign-in>. You'll complete identity verification right on the spot. You're enrolled! Users with a secure Level 2 eAuthentication ID linked to their USDA customer record can apply for select USDA programs, view and print farm maps and farm records data. Enrolling is easy! Visit farmers.gov/sign-in to learn more.

To locate a service center near you or use online services not requiring eAuthentication access, visit www.farmers.gov. For technical assistance, call the eAuthentication help desk at 1-800-457-3642.

USDA Announces Updates for Honeybee Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced updates to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP). These updates include changes required by the 2018 Farm Bill as well as discretionary changes intended to improve the administration of the program and clarify existing program requirements. ELAP was previously administered based on FSA's fiscal year but will now run according to the calendar year. Producers are still required to submit an application for payment within 30 calendar days of the end of the program year. This is not a policy change but will affect the deadline. The signup deadline for calendar year 2020 losses is January 30, 2021.

Starting in 2020, producers will have 15 days from when the loss is first apparent, instead of 30 days, to file a honeybee notice of loss. This change provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey. For other covered losses, including livestock feed, grazing and farm-raised fish losses, the notice of loss deadline for ELAP will remain 30 days from when the loss is first apparent to the producer.

Program participants who were paid for the loss of a honeybee colony or hive in either or both of the previous two years will be required to provide additional documentation to substantiate how current year inventory was acquired.

If the honeybee colony loss incurred was because of Colony Collapse Disorder, program participants must provide a producer certification that the loss was a direct result of at least three of the five symptoms of Colony Collapse Disorder, which include:

- the loss of live queen and/or drone bee populations inside the hives;
- rapid decline of adult worker bee population outside the hives, leaving brood poorly or completely unattended;
- absence of dead adult bees inside the hive and outside the entrance of the hive;
- absence of robbing collapsed colonies; and
- at the time of collapse, varroa mite and Nosema populations are not at levels known to cause economic injury or population decline.

For honeybees, ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

ELAP also provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock and farm-raised fish including for feed and grazing losses. It covers losses because of eligible adverse weather or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires on federally managed lands. ELAP also covers losses resulting from the cost of transporting water to livestock due to an eligible drought.

For more information on ELAP visit farmers.gov/recover or contact your FSA County Office. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2020 crops. A notice of loss must be filed the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.

Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA Adds Flexibilities for Crop Insurance to Support America's Farmers and Ranchers

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is authorizing additional flexibilities due to coronavirus while continuing to support producers, working through Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to deliver services, including processing policies, claims and agreements. These flexibilities include: enabling producers to send notifications and reports electronically, extending the date for production reports and providing additional time and deferring interest on premium and other payments.

Electronic Notifications Allowed for Required Reports

Producers may send notifications and reports electronically for written agreement issues, acreage and production reporting and upcoming sales closing dates (deadlines to buy crop insurance). Notice of the policyholder's election may be provided over the phone with appropriate documentation of the call or using electronic methods followed by their confirmation of such election in writing (a signed, or e-signed, form) no later than July 15, 2020.

Production Reporting Date Extended

For the 2020 crop year, AIPs may accept production reports through the earlier of the acreage reporting date (ARD) or 30 days after the production reporting date (PRD) for crops insured under the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions with a PRD of March 15, 2020, or later. Generally, the PRD for crops insured under the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions is the earlier of the ARD or 45 days after the cancellation date.

Additional Time Given and Interest Deferred on Premium Payments, Written Payment Agreements

AIPs are authorized to provide additional time for policyholders to make payment of premium and administrative fees. Interest accrual on premium payments and administrative fees will be waived to the earliest of an additional 60 days from the scheduled payment due date or the termination date on policies with premium billing dates between March 1, 2020, and April 30, 2020. AIPs are also authorized to provide additional time for policyholders to make payment for Written Payment Agreements due between March 1, 2020, and April 30, 2020. Payments may be extended up to 60 days from the scheduled payment due date and considered a timely payment.

RMA staff are working with AIPs and other customers by phone, mail and electronically to continue supporting crop insurance coverage for producers. Farmers with crop insurance questions or needs should continue to contact their insurance agents about conducting business remotely (by telephone or email).

For the most current updates on available services, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Marketing Assistance Loans Available for 2019 Crops

The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs).

MALs provide financing and marketing assistance for 2019 crop wheat, feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

To be eligible for an MAL, producers must have a beneficial interest in the commodity, in addition to other requirements. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained. For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office.

CRP Continuous Enrollment Period

The Farm Service Agency is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

CRP is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”), to control soil erosion, improve the water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Continuous signup enrollment contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time.

Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

Unlike CRP enrollments under general CRP signups or CRP Grasslands, offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

NRCS Announces EQIP Application Cutoff for Three Special IL Projects

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will offer funding for three unique efforts in Illinois during Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. All projects will use the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Below are details and application cutoff dates to note. Each project is restricted to certain Illinois counties.

Illinois Headwaters Conservation Partnership in East-Central Illinois

This project will control invasive plants in forest stands in east-central Illinois. NRCS has partnered with the **Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Headwaters Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP)** to help producers address resource concerns such as water quality and soil health. Landowners can apply for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement forest stand improvement, brush management, herbaceous weed control and tree/shrub establishment practices. The project focus is to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality by improving forest health in the following 11 counties: Champaign, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, Piatt and Vermilion. Financial assistance will be available to producers in east-central Illinois who have land in the above-mentioned counties.

Otter Lake Source Water Protection Project

This project will offer funding in Macoupin, Morgan, and Sangamon Counties for the Otter Lake Source Water Protection project. NRCS has partnered with **Illinois Corn Growers Association** to help producers address resource concerns, such as degraded water quality and soil erosion. Producers can apply for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement practices, such as denitrifying bioreactors, saturated buffers, cover crops, nutrient management, and no-till. The project focus is to improve water quality in the Otter Lake Watershed located in portions of Macoupin, Morgan, and Sangamon Counties. Financial assistance will be available to producers with land located in the Otter Lake Watershed.

Upper Macoupin Creek Watershed Project

This project offers funding in Macoupin County for the Upper Macoupin Creek Watershed project. NRCS has partnered with **American Farmland Trust** to help producers address resource concerns, such as degraded water quality and soil erosion. Producers can apply for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement practices, such as drainage water management, denitrifying bioreactors, cover crops, nutrient management, and no-till. The project focus is to improve water quality in the Upper Macoupin Creek Watershed located in portions of Macoupin County. Submit applications to Carlinville NRCS field office.

While applications for these programs are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit an application to the appropriate NRCS field office by the cutoff date of **May 1, 2020**, to ensure applications are considered for FY 2020 funding. To see if you are eligible to participate in the program, producers should contact their local NRCS field office or visit the Illinois NRCS website at www.il.nrcs.usda.gov. Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, producers may set up phone appointments with their local NRCS office if they have any questions or need information.

Maintaining the Quality of Loan Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition and a violation of the terms and conditions of the Note and Security Agreement. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan. If you have questions concerning the movement of grain under loan, please contact your local county FSA office.

April Interest Rates and Important Dates



Selected Interest Rates for April 2020	
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.375%
Farm Ownership-Direct	3.000%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	0.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	0.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	1.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	1.125%
Commodity Loans	1.625%

Dates to Remember	
April 15	Primary Nesting Season Begins – Do Not Disturb CRP Acres until August 1st
May 31	Final date to request 2019 crop corn, soybeans and grain sorghum MAL
Continuous	2018 ARC/PLC Farm Program enrollment
Continuous	Sign-up for FSA text messages from your local county office
Continuous	Update Your Farm Records
Ongoing	Farm Storage Facility Loans Sign Up
Ongoing	Marketing Assistance Loans Sign Up
Ongoing	Sign-up for Continuous CRP

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).