

September 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Louisiana FSA Newsletter

Louisiana Farm Service Agency

3737 Government Street
Alexandria, LA 71302

State Executive Director:
Craig A. McCain

State Committee:
Ray Young, Chairperson
John Earles
Kristy Jones

Message from Craig A. McCain, FSA State Executive Director

As I write this, I am reflecting on the weeks after landfall of the most powerful hurricane to make landfall in our State since 1856. It is important for you to know that while COVID protocol limits our ability to meet with you to conduct face to face business, we continue to be staffed in all locations except Lake Charles. Anyone who needs assistance or information should contact their local County Office via telephone to make an appointment or to get information about FSA loans or programs. Producers served by the Lake Charles location may continue to contact FSA staff via telephone using the normal telephone number, but we do not have

Julie Richard
Donna Winters

staff onsite due to the on the ground conditions. We will be back in this location as soon as possible.

Next State Committee Meeting:

To be determined

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or parish.

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

Producers who feel that they suffered or could have suffered losses eligible for one or more FSA programs should document the loss in any reasonable way possible. Photographs and other records such as receipts, harvest records, livestock inventory records, veterinary records, etc.; should be gathered and stored in order to support any current or future request for assistance. In addition, contact your local FSA office and make them aware of your losses and then determine what program may be applicable to these losses.

Whether you are interested in operating capital or some disaster program benefit, FSA personnel are ready and willing to assist you in this recovery process.

Do Right and Feed Everyone!

Thank you for your service to this Country and to the World!

Upcoming Important Dates

- **Sept. 14 - Dec. 14** Seafood Trade Relief Program signup period
- **Sept. 30** PLC Yield update deadline
- **Sept. 30** Aquaculture Acreage reporting deadline
- **Sept. 30** 2021 NAP Grazing Sales closing date
- **Oct. 9** Extended CFAP deadline due to Hurricane Laura
- **Oct. 12** USDA Service Centers will be closed in observance of the Columbus Day Holiday
- **Oct. 13** enrollment for 2021 DMC program begins
- **Nov. 2** County Committee election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters
- **Ongoing into 2020** is the signup period for WHIP+

Louisiana FSA now offers **SMS texting**; receive text message alerts on your cell phone regarding important deadlines, reporting requirements and updates. Contact your local FSA Office for more information.

More information on the CFAP process is available on farmers.gov/cfap or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Louisiana Farmers and Ranchers Impacted by Hurricane Laura

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Louisiana offers disaster assistance to assist you in your recovery efforts following recent high winds, heavy rains and flooding.

Available programs and loans include:

- **Non-Insured 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 excessive wind and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing). You must have NAP coverage for the current crop year.

- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disaster
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs.
- **Emergency Loan Program** – available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous Secretarial Disaster designation. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to flooding.
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; includes fence loss.

To establish or retain FSA program eligibility, you must timely file an FSA form CCC- 576, *Notice of Loss* for the following losses:

- Uninsured crops (including grasses) must be reported before the disposition of the crop.
- Crops covered by NAP must be reported within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date.
 - Except hand-harvested crops covered by NAP, within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.
- Livestock must be reported within 30 days of when losses become apparent.
- Honeybees must be reported within 15 days of when losses become apparent.
- Grazing or feed must be reported within 30 days of when losses become apparent.

For more information on these programs, contact your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-center-locator or visit farmers.gov/recover

Contacting FSA

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices are open in Louisiana by phone appointment only until further notice, and FSA staff are available to continue helping agricultural producers with program signups, loan servicing and other important actions. Additionally, FSA is relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need.

FSA will be accepting forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

FSA encourages producers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. For Service Center contact information, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Farmers and Ranchers in Louisiana Now Have Until Oct. 9 to Apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Deadline Extended due to Hurricane Laura

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) will extend the deadline for farmers and ranchers to apply for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) from Sept. 11, 2020, to Oct. 9, 2020, for producers in Louisiana. FSA is only authorizing this deadline extension for areas impacted by Hurricane Laura.

CFAP provides direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. Over 160 commodities are eligible for CFAP, including certain non-specialty crops, livestock, dairy, wool, specialty crops, eggs, aquaculture, and nursery crops and cut flowers. All eligible commodities, payment rates, and calculations can be found on farmers.gov/cfap.

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.

Information on how to apply, including the application form and all other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap/apply. For existing FSA customers, these documents are likely already on file.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in the office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Learn about USDA's Disaster Assistance Programs

When disaster strikes, USDA is here to help. From hurricanes to wildfire, and from flooding to drought, USDA offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers and livestock producers recover.

To better assist producers, USDA has published a new brochure, [Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance](#). The brochure is a quick reference guide to available Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency disaster assistance programs.

The brochure gives a short description of each program and lets you quickly identify which program(s) are available for each natural disaster event.

Also, on farmers.gov, you can learn about USDA disaster assistance programs that might be right for you. With the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), you answer five questions about the natural disasters that have impacted your operation to find out which USDA programs offer assistance.

The Disaster Assistance Programs At A Glance brochure can be [downloaded here](#) and is located on farmers.gov/recover. To learn how to apply for disaster programs, contact your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

AskFSA to Transition to Ask USDA on September 21

AskFSA, the tool for FSA customers to ask questions about FSA programs and services, will transition to Ask USDA on September 21. This is part of USDA's ongoing effort to improve and streamline customer service.

Ask USDA, available at <https://ask.usda.gov> is similar to AskFSA, but provides information for all USDA programs. Moving to Ask USDA will allow all USDA customers to search for and read answers about FSA programs and services in the same location as they read about other USDA programs and services.

Customers will still be able to submit questions if they need more information. In addition to email, Ask USDA offers the ability to ask questions through phone or online chat. This improved customer service approach further builds on Secretary Sonny Perdue's OneUSDA vision and provides the customer a one-stop shopping experience that covers all of USDA's many programs.

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 USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov.

FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options

There are options for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about your options.

USDA Supports U.S. Seafood Industry Impacted by Retaliatory Tariffs

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide approximately \$530 million to support the U.S. seafood industry and fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments. The funding will be provided through the Seafood Trade Relief Program and funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Background:

The Seafood Trade Relief Program funding will support the following seafood types:

- Atka mackerel
- Crab (Dungeness, King, Snow, Southern Tanner)
- Flounder
- Geoduck
- Goosefish
- Herrings

- Lobster
- Pacific Cod
- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Pollock
- Sablefish
- Salmon
- Sole
- Squid
- Tuna
- Turbot

Fishermen can sign-up for relief through the program from September 14, 2020 to December 14, 2020. Fishermen should apply through their local USDA Service Center. To find your local Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator. The application can be found at www.farmers.gov/seafood.

FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy

The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide you with interim financing after harvest to help you meet cash flow needs without having to sell your commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2019 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.

Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to Adjusted Gross Income provisions.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, you must have form [CCC-633EZ, Page 1](#) on file at your local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that if your total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000, then you're not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. You must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for federal funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). Applications for eligible certification expenses paid between Oct. 1, 2019, and Sept. 30, 2020, are due Oct. 31, 2020.

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Eligible expenses for cost-share reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Changes in Reimbursement

Due to expected participation levels for fiscal year 2020, FSA revised the reimbursement amount through fiscal year 2023. Certified producers and handlers are now eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 50 percent of the certified organic operation's eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope.

This change is due to the limited amount of funding available and will allow a larger number of certified organic operations to receive assistance. If additional funding is authorized later, FSA may provide additional assistance to certified operations that have applied for OCCSP, not to exceed 75 percent of their eligible costs, up to \$750 per scope.

The changes to the payment calculation and maximum payment amount are applicable to all certified organic operations, regardless of whether they apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency. State agencies that are interested in overseeing reimbursements to producers and handlers in their states must establish new agreements with FSA for fiscal 2020.

Opportunities for State Agencies

Today's announcement also includes the opportunity for state agencies to apply for grant agreements to administer the OCCSP program in fiscal 2020. State agencies that establish agreements for fiscal 2020 may be able to extend their agreements and receive additional funds to administer the program in future years.

FSA has not yet determined whether an additional application period will be announced for later years for state agencies that choose not to participate in fiscal 2020. States that would like to administer OCCSP for future years are encouraged to establish an agreement for 2020 to ensure that they will be able to continue to participate.

FSA will accept applications from state agencies for fiscal year 2020 funding for cost-share assistance from Aug. 10, 2020 through Sept. 9, 2020.

State Agencies must submit the Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form 424 and 424B) electronically via Grants.gov, the Federal grants website, at <http://www.grants.gov>.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the [OCCSP webpage](#), view the [notice of funds availability on the Federal Register](#), or contact the [FSA county office](#) at your local USDA Service Center.

To learn more about USDA support for organic agriculture, visit usda.gov/organic.

Current Interest Rates for September

- Farm Operating Loans — Direct 1.250%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct 2.250%
- Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher — 1.50%
- Emergency Loans — 2.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years) — 0.125%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years) — 0.250%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) — 0.500%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years) — 0.625%
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years) — 0.750%
- Sugar Storage Facility Loans (15 year term) — 0.875%
- Commodity Loans — 1.125%

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).