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USDA Welcomes Community Gardens to its People's Garden Initiative

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) welcomes school gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban, and urban areas to be recognized as a "People's Garden." People's Gardens grow fresh, healthy food and support resilient, local food systems; teach people how to garden using conservation practices; nurture habitat for pollinators and wildlife and create greenspace for neighbors.



To be part of the initiatives, gardens should be registered on the USDA website and meet criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices, and educating the public. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People's Garden sign. New gardens will join the People's Garden at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 17 other flagship gardens established in 2022.

USDA originally launched the People's Garden Initiative in 2009. It's named for the "People's Department," former President Abraham Lincoln's nickname for USDA, which was established during his presidency in 1862.

To learn more about People's Garden or to register one, visit the People's Garden webpage at usda.gov/Peoples-Garden.

The People's Garden Initiative is part of USDA's broader efforts to advance equity, support local and regional food systems and access to food, and encourage use of conservation and climate-smart practices.

Avoid Scams Related to USDA Financial Assistance for Farmers Facing Discrimination

(Check <https://www.farmers.gov/22007> for updates.)

Overview

Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides \$2.2 billion in financial assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs prior to January 1, 2021.

USDA is aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about this process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. Note that application forms for this program are **not** yet available and the application filing period has **not** started.

You can get up-to-date information about this program at farmers.gov/22007, a USDA website.

Protect Yourself from Potential Scams!

1. When in doubt, check it out.

- Avoid providing personal or financial information to unknown parties.
- Beware of solicitations by mail, email, or phone calls from individuals claiming to be connected to USDA. USDA will not solicit you for information.
- There is no fee to apply for this financial assistance.
- The most current information on the process and timeline of this program can currently be found at farmers.gov/22007. Before the application process opens, the National Administrator of this program will provide a webpage you can go to for helpful information; it will be linked from farmers.gov/22007.

2. **Beware of organizations seeking to file your application for a fee.**

- You will **not** need a lawyer to file an application for financial assistance under Section 22007 of the IRA. If you feel the need for legal advice, seek the assistance of a trusted, licensed attorney.
- Before the application process opens, USDA will publish a list of trusted community organizations located across the country, these organizations will provide FREE help completing applications.
- Filing an application will be FREE.
- Beware of advance-fee scams or solicitations that promise a significant share of a large sum of money.

3. **Report scams to the USDA Office of the Inspector General.**

- Beware of scams involving fake settlement or cashier's checks followed by requests to wire part of the payment to an individual disguised as an attorney.
- If you believe there is an organization conducting a scam related to this process, please contact the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) or any other appropriate authorities. The USDA OIG hotline complaint can be accessed online at <https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/hotline>; OIG's phone number is (800) 424-9121.

FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers



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

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality,

prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

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 also 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 local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans

Know your Final Planting Dates



All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

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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).