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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA- Missouri State Office Newsletter - August 23, 2022

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"What's Happening Today at FSA"

As it was in my last column, the big issue involving Agriculture across the state at this time is drought. Although we have had some pretty good rains across much of the state during the past couple of weeks, many counties, mainly in the Southwest part of the state, currently qualify for drought assistance, either through the



Livestock Forage Program (LFP), the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP), or one of our Conservation Assistance Programs.

On August 11th I got the chance to visit with Rod Bealer, Safety Net Chief in the Missouri State Office, about FSA programs available to support livestock producers experiencing drought conditions in the state.

Click Here to view the video.

As we discussed in my last column, the sole factor in determining whether or not a County qualifies for drought assistance is the US Drought Monitor. This instrument measures how much rainfall that a particular County has had recently along with USDA/NASS Topsoil Moisture, Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI), and NOAA/NESDIS satellite Vegetation Health Indices, and it rates the dryness of the ground in the County on a scale of D0 to D4, with the higher the number, the drier the ground. To qualify for drought assistance under the LFP and ELAP programs, a County must register a rating of at least D3 on the

monitor at any time, or register a rating of D2 for 8 consecutive weeks. In terms of the Conservation drought assistance programs, a County must register a rating of at least D3 at any time, or a rating of D2 for 2 consecutive weeks.

During the past couple of weeks, we have received calls asking us how a particular County does not qualify for drought assistance, while the surrounding Counties do qualify. This does seem strange but again, it all depends on the rating of the Drought Monitor for each County. This is spelled out in Federal Law for the LFP and ELAP programs, under the current Federal Farm Bill, and we at FSA are not authorized to make exceptions to this rule. Also, it can happen that one part of a County can be much drier than another part of the same County. Under the law, if any portion of a County receives a drought eligible rating, the entire County is eligible for drought assistance.

If you have questions about the drought status of your County, check with your nearest FSA Service Center. The staff there can tell you if your County qualifies for drought assistance and, if it does, they can assist you in the application process.

We certainly hope that the weather in our state will improve during the next few months, and that your farming operation will be highly productive and successful.

Joe Aull Missouri FSA State Executive Director

Five Facts About the United States Drought Monitor

This is likely no surprise to you, but drought persists across the western U.S. and is intensifying in some areas. No geographic area is immune to the potential of drought at any given time. The <u>U.S. Drought Monitor</u> provides a weekly drought assessment, and it plays an important role in USDA programs that help farmers and ranchers recover from drought.

Fact #1 - Numerous agencies use the Drought Monitor to inform drought-related decisions

The map identifies areas of drought and labels them by intensity on a weekly basis. It categorizes the entire country as being in one of six levels of drought. The first two, None and Abnormally Dry (D0), are not considered to be drought. The next four describe increasing levels of drought: Moderate (D1), Severe (D2), Extreme (D3) and Exceptional (D4).

While many entities consult the Drought Monitor for drought information, drought declarations are made by federal, <u>state</u> and local agencies that may or may not use the Drought Monitor to inform their decisions. Some of the ways USDA uses it to determine a producer's eligibility for certain <u>drought assistance programs</u>, like the <u>Livestock Forage Disaster Program</u> and <u>Emergency Haying or Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acres</u> and to "fast-track" <u>Secretarial drought disaster designations</u>.

Fact #2 - U.S. Drought Monitor is made with more than precipitation data.

When you think about drought, you probably think about water, or the lack of it. Precipitation plays a major role in the creation of the Drought Monitor, but the map's author considers <u>numerous indicators</u>, including <u>drought impacts</u> and local insight from over 450 expert observers around the country. Authors use several dozen indicators to assess drought, including precipitation, streamflow, reservoir levels, temperature and evaporative demand, soil moisture and vegetation health. Because the drought monitor depicts both short and long-term drought conditions, the authors must look at data for multiple timeframes. The final map produced each week represents a summary of the story being told by all the pieces of data. To help tell that story, authors don't just look at data. They converse over the course of the map-making week with experts across the country and draw information about drought impacts from media reports and private citizens.

Fact #3 - A real person, using real data, updates the map.

Each week's map author, not a computer, processes and analyzes data to update the drought monitor. The <u>map authors</u> are trained climatologists or meteorologists from the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (the academic partner and website host of the Drought Monitor), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and USDA. The author's job is to do what a computer can't – use their expertise to reconcile the sometimes-conflicting stories told by each stream of data into a single assessment.

Fact #4 - The Drought Monitor provides a current snapshot, not a forecast.

The Drought Monitor is a "snapshot" of conditions observed during the most recent week and builds off the previous week's map. The map is released on Thursdays and depicts conditions based on data for the week that ended the preceding Tuesday. Rain that falls on the Wednesday just before the USDM's release won't be reflected until the next map is published. This provides a consistent, week-to-week product and gives the author a window to assess the data and come up with a final map.

Fact #5 - Your input can be part of the drought-monitoring process.

State climatologists and other trained observers in the drought monitoring network relay on-the-ground information from numerous sources to the US Drought monitor author each week. That can include information that you contribute.

The Drought Monitor serves as a trigger for multiple forms of federal disaster relief for agricultural producers, and sometimes producers contact the author to suggest that drought conditions in their area are worse than what the latest drought monitor shows. When the author gets a call like that, it prompts them to look closely at all available data for that area, to see whether measurements of precipitation, temperature, soil moisture and other indicators corroborate producer-submitted reports. This is the process that authors follow whether they receive one report or one hundred reports, although reports from more points may help state officials and others know where to look for impacts.

There are multiple ways to contribute your observations:

- Talk to your state climatologist Find the current list at the <u>American Association</u> of <u>State Climatologists</u> website.
- 2. **Email** Emails sent to <u>droughtmonitor@unl.edu</u> inform the USDM authors.
- Become a CoCoRaHS observer Submit drought reports along with daily precipitation observations to the <u>Community Collaborative Rain</u>, <u>Hail & Snow</u> Network.
- 4. Submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) go.unl.edu/CMOR.

For more information, read our <u>Ask the Expert blog with a NDMC climatologist</u> or visit farmers.gov/protection-recovery.

FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)

If you've suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock:
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock,
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.*

*Hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for "empty miles."

Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.

ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year. ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK TO FORAGE/GRAZING ACRES

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.

For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.

ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more

2022 DMC Premiums due Sept. 1, 2022

Dairy producers have until Sept. 1, 2022, to pay premiums for the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program. With monthly DMC program triggers well above the \$9.50 per hundredweight (cwt) coverage level, there have been no indemnity payments distributed through the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) through June 2022. In prior years, producers were able to deduct annual DMC premiums from indemnity payments, but that's not the case this year.

Approximately 75% of calendar year 2022 DMC and Supplemental DMC premiums have not been paid as the payment deadline of Sept. 1 approaches.

Failure to pay the DMC premium by the deadline may affect a dairy operation's ability to participate in the DMC program in future years. Contact your local FSA office for more information.

For more information visit the <u>FSA dairy programs webpage</u> or the <u>online dairy decision</u> tool.

USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters

More than 18,000 producers will receive applications in late August

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced another installment (phase) in assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021. More than 18,000 producers will soon receive new or updated pre-filled disaster applications to offset eligible crop losses. Approximately \$6.4 billion has already been distributed to 165,000 producers through USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

FSA will begin mailing pre-filled applications in late August to producers who have potentially eligible losses and:

- Received crop insurance indemnities for qualifying 2020 and 2021 disaster events after May 2, 2022.
- Received crop insurance indemnities associated with Nursery, Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) and Margin Protection (MP) policies.
- New primary policyholders not included in the initial insured producer Phase 1
 mailing from May 25, 2022, because their claim records had not been filled.
- Certain 2020 prevent plant losses related to qualifying 2020 disaster events that
 had only been recorded in crop insurance records as related to 2019 adverse
 weather events and, as such, were not previously provided in applications sent
 earlier this year.
- New Substantial Beneficial Interest (SBI) records, including SBIs where tax identification numbers were corrected.

Producers are expected to receive assistance direct deposited into their bank account within three business days after they sign and return the pre-filled application to the FSA county office and the county office enters the application into the system.

Before applying any program payment factors or eligibility criteria, it is estimated that this next installment (phase) may generate about \$756 million in assistance.

Emergency Relief Payments to Date

This emergency relief under ERP complements ERP assistance recently provided to more than 165,000 producers who had received crop insurance indemnities and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments for qualifying losses. USDA has processed more than 255,000 applications for ERP, and to date, has made approximately \$6.4 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within davs of the program announcement.

Phase Two

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP will be aimed at filling gaps and provide assistance to producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing risk management programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

More Information

In addition, on Aug. 18, 2022, USDA published a technical correction to the Notice of Funds Availability for ERP and ELRP to clarify how income from the sale of farm equipment and the provision of production inputs and services to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and farm operations are to be considered in the calculation of average adjusted gross farm income. Producers whose average adjusted gross farm income is at least

75% of the producer's the average Adjusted Gross Income can gain access to a higher payment limitation.

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are authorized by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit <u>FSA's Emergency, Relief webpage</u>. A <u>new public-facing dashboard</u> on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty–specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard every Monday.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including the Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet and Farm Loan Discovery Tool. For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their crop insurance agent.

USDA Announces First Three Lenders for Heirs' Property Relending Program

Additional Lenders Invited to Apply to Program

USDA is announcing that Shared Capital Cooperative, Akiptan, Inc. and the Cherokee Nation Economic Development Trust Authority (CNEDTA), have been approved or conditionally approved as intermediary lenders through the Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP). Once HPRP loans with these lenders close, these lenders will help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues. Additionally, USDA encourages more intermediary lenders, including cooperatives, credit unions and nonprofit organizations to apply. More information is at farmers.gov/heirs/relending.

Heirs may apply directly to the intermediary lenders for loans to resolve land ownership and succession issues. Learn more: <u>USDA Announces First Three Lenders for Heirs'</u> Property Relending Program

Applying for Beginning Farmer Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

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

Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses.

Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

USDA Advances Food System Transformation with \$43 Million for Urban Agriculture and

Innovation, Adds New Urban County Committees

USDA announced significant investments to support urban agriculture, including \$43.1 million for grants and cooperative agreements as well as six new urban county committees to help deliver key USDA programs to urban producers. These actions support USDA's efforts to strengthen the food supply chain and transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient.

Specifically, USDA is investing \$10.2 million in new cooperative agreements to expand compost and food waste reduction efforts and \$14.2 million in new grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. Additionally, \$18.7 million will fund 75 worthy grant proposals from the 2021 application cycle, which was oversubscribed.

These investments build on USDA's Food Systems Transformation Framework unveiled earlier. The goals of USDA's Food System Transformation Framework include:

- Building a more resilient food supply chain that provides more and better market options for consumers and producers while reducing carbon pollution.
- Creating a fairer food system that combats market dominance and helps producers and consumers gain more power in the marketplace by creating new, more and better local market options.
- Making nutritious food more accessible and affordable for consumers.
- Emphasizing equity by creating wealth that stays in small towns and underserved communities.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is also standing up six more urban county committees, which help deliver farm loans, disaster assistance, safety net and conservation programs.

Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements

This is the third year of USDA's Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, and so far, USDA has invested \$3 million in community composting in urban areas across the country. The \$10.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will fund pilot projects that develop and implement strategies for municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.

Local governments may submit projects that do one or more of the following:

- · generate compost;
- · provide access to compost to farmers;
- · reduce fertilizer use;
- · improve soil quality;
- encourage waste management and permaculture business development;
- increase rainwater absorption: reduce municipal food waste: and/or
- · divert food waste from landfills.

Priority will be given to projects that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits, incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to farmers, including community gardeners, integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts and collaborate with multiple partners. Projects should span two years.

Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) Grants

This is also the third year of OUAIP grants, which have already provided more than \$7.5 million focused on food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs. The \$14.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through:

- Planning Projects that initiate or expand efforts of urban and suburban farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders to target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, urban forestry, and policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.
- Implementation Projects that accelerate urban, indoor and other agricultural
 practices that serve multiple farmers and improve local food access. They may
 support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, education and urban farming
 policy implementation.

How to Apply for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Submit applications via grants.gov for <u>Composting and Food Waste Reduction</u>
<u>Cooperative Agreements</u> and <u>UAIP Grants</u>. Pre-recorded webinars on the purpose, project types, eligibility and basic requirements for submitting applications will be posted at <u>usda.gov/urban</u>. Email <u>UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov</u> with any questions.

Urban County Committees for Urban Agriculture

The new urban county committee (UCOC) locations are Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, and Oakland, and they join 11 previously announced urban county committees. The six locations for county committees were selected based on a consideration of data that included opportunity for economic growth, diversity, proximity to tribal nations, as well as the number of farm-to-table projects, urban farms, community

and residential gardens, and green infrastructure projects within metropolitan and

Like rural county committee members, urban committee members make important decisions about how FSA programs are administered locally. Each urban and suburban county committee will be composed of three elected members who will serve a term of up to three years. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting for themselves or others.

USDA Renews People's Garden Initiative

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently planted a tree to announce the reopening of the USDA's People's Garden Initiative. People's Gardens across the country will 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. The garden at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. will be joined by 17 flagship gardens located in urban communities nationwide.

The Washington, D.C. People's Garden is growing plants in a variety of ways, from small containers to wheelchair accessible raised beds. Active beehives are on the rooftop of the USDA Whitten Building. In early spring, cool weather crops like peas, kale, collards, radishes, cilantro, parsley, carrots, lettuces, beets, chard and spinach are planted, followed by warm weather crops like beans, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, and pumpkins in late spring and early summer. Conservation practices like cover crops and pollinator plantings are being used to conserve natural resources. Meanwhile, USDA has plans to launch flagship gardens in urban communities. Those cities include:

- · Albuquerque, N.M.
- · Atlanta, Ga
- · Chicago, III
- · Cleveland, Ohio
- · Dallas, Texas
- · Detroit, Mich.
- · Grand Rapids, Mich.
- · Los Angeles, Calif.
- · Minneapolis, Minn.
- · New Orleans, La.
- New York, N.Y.
- Oakland, Calif
- · Philadelphia, Pa.
- · Phoenix, Ariz, · Portland, Ore.
- · Richmond, Va.
- · St. Louis, Mo.

USDA plans to expand the initiative to other communities later this year. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural and urban areas can be recognized as a "People's Garden" if they

- Benefit the community by providing food, green space, wildlife habitat, education
- · Are a collaborative effort. This can include groups working together with USDA agencies, food banks, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, conservation districts, etc.
- Incorporate conservation management practices, such as using native plant species, rain barrels, integrated pest management, xeriscaping.
- Educate the public about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of local, diverse, and resilient food systems providing healthy food for the community.

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 watch these gardens grow, visit our People's Garden Webpage or follow the hashtag #PeoplesGarden on USDA's social media channels.

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.

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. 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, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

FSA is Adjusting to Fit the Situation Facing Livestock Producers

A message from FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux

As a former rancher myself, I know the tremendous investments—in time, sweat, and thought—that producers make even before their calves hit the ground. My experiences lead me to firmly believe that, here at the Farm Service Agency (FSA), we must find flexibilities where possible to help our farmers and ranchers best meet the challenges of the day.

In recent meetings with Senator John Hoeven, FSA North Dakota State Executive Director Marcy Svenningsen, and livestock producers in North Dakota impacted by catastrophic 2021 winter storms, it became apparent that our Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) payment rates were not reflective of the true market value for non-adult beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals. It was time for us to pivot.

LIP provides benefits to livestock owners and some contract growers for livestock deaths exceeding normal mortality from eligible adverse weather events, certain predation losses and reduced sales prices due to injury from an eligible loss.

Indemnity payments are made at a rate of 75 percent of the market value of the livestock on the day before the date of death. I don't mind saying that, under our previous payment rates, cutting a LIP check to a rancher for \$150 for a calf in today's market came nowhere near covering the year-long investment in carrying the cow through pregnancy and carrying the calf from birth to sale.

To better capture ranchers' investments in their animals, we recently announced increased LIP payment rates for beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals less than 250 pounds. These now-updated payment rates are reflective of the substantial increased cost of these non-adult livestock in 2022.

The updated LIP payment rates are effective immediately and will be applied retroactively starting January 1, 2022, for all eligible causes of loss including excessive heat, tornado, winter storms, and other qualifying natural disasters. Producers who have already received LIP payments for 2022 will receive an additional payment, if applicable, commensurate with these updated rates. For details on eligibility and payment rates, you can review our LIP fact sheet.

Other Program Improvements

These LIP policy changes complement enhancements we recently made to our <u>Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)</u> – changes that also were derived from the direct input and feedback of producers and the livestock groups.

In addition to paying above normal costs for hauling water to drought-stricken livestock, we also added compensation for hauling feed to livestock and livestock to forage or other grazing acres. And, in 2021, we added fish raised for food as an ELAP-eligible commodity because producers and industry leaders expressed the need.

By continually evaluating how we can deliver our programs in a manner that is meaningful to the farmers and ranchers we serve, we demonstrate our ongoing commitment to stakeholder engagement and our dedication to improving programs for livestock producers first signaled by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack during a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing earlier this year.

It has been said actions speak louder than words, but when it comes to FSA programs that directly affect producers' livelihoods and way of life and ultimately impact food security for all Americans, I believe the two are not mutually exclusive. Rest assured that when producers and producer groups speak, FSA and I, to the extent possible, will do whatever is within our power to turn those words into actions.

Streamlined Delivery of Emergency Relief Programs Is Win-Win for USDA and Agricultural Producers

New Program Outperforms Predecessor Disaster Program in speed of assistance and almost 90% reduced application burden, Online Analytics Now Available

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has processed more than 255,000 applications for the new Emergency Relief Program (ERP). USDA has made approximately \$6.1 billion, to date, in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. By breaking-down agency barriers, using existing data across USDA and pre-filled applications, USDAs Farm Service Agency (FSA) in cooperation with the Risk

Management Agency (RMA) has been able to expediently provide economic relief and save producers and staff over a million hours of time.

The design of ERP Phase One allowed for an expedited process that saved time for staff and producers. FSA was able to begin disbursing payments to producers within days of rolling out the program when under the predecessor program lengthy applications and processing were required before making payments. FSA county offices can process almost nine ERP applications in the time it took to process one application for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program — Plus (WHIP+), the predecessor program for ad hoc disaster assistance. This equates to 88% less time to process applications and a reduction of more than one million staff hours for implementation of ERP compared with WHIP+. While not specifically tracked, we expect the savings for producers to be at least as significant as they previously would have had a significant burden to collect records and often sit across from the local staff as the data is entered.

These process improvements also enhanced the customer experience for farmers by reducing the number of producer trips to FSA county offices and allowing producers to spend less time completing forms so they could focus more on their agricultural operations. In addition, the ERP program design greatly diminished the risk potential for errors and leveraged the existing RMA and Federal Crop Insurance loss adjustment and verification processes. With more applications approved, more dollars distributed, and more dollars paid per application in a shorter timeframe, the streamlined application process developed to deliver ERP has significantly outperformed the previous implementation of WHIP+. FSA also has paid more than \$1 billion to historically underserved producers.

Emergency Relief Payments to Date

The efforts to streamline, improve responsiveness and work across traditional agency-borders goes beyond just the recent ERP process. FSA mailed pre-filled ERP applications to producers of commodities covered by federal crop insurance in late May and has since paid producers with eligible losses more than \$6 billion. Pre-filled ERP applications were mailed to producers with Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage last week, and so far, FSA has already issued \$35.9 million in payments to producers with eligible losses. NAP-related ERP payments also were not factored and are being made, in full, from the start to speed and target assistance to the small and underserved producers that commonly rely on NAP coverage. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

ERP Data Now Available Online

A new <u>public-facing dashboard</u> on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty, specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard on Monday each week.

More Information

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are funded by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disaster events experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit FSA's Emergency Relief webpage.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet and Farm Loan Discovery Tool. For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their crop insurance agent.

USDA Invests \$14.5 Million in Taxpayer Education, Program Outreach Efforts for Farmers and Ranchers

Learn more and register for a free webinar

FSA is investing in two outreach and education efforts for farmers and ranchers, including those who are new to agriculture or who have been historically underserved by programs.

First, FSA is announcing \$10 million in the new Taxpayer Education and Asset Protection Initiative. Through this initiative, FSA has partnered with the University of Arkansas and the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee to deliver tax education resources for farmers and ranchers, which includes engagement with agricultural educators, and tax professionals through partnerships with community groups and minority serving institutions across the country.

Second, FSA is investing \$4.5 million in outreach for the Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentives Program (CRP TIP), which increases access to land for new farmers and ranchers. FSA will award cooperative agreements to 15 to 20 partner and stakeholder organizations to conduct outreach and technical assistance and promote awareness and understanding among agricultural communities, particularly those who are military veterans, new to farming, or historically underserved.

Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, handling equipment and storage and handling trucks. Some eligible equipment may include augers, dryers, grain carts, grain trailers, hay bale wrappers and hay bale accumulators. For a complete list of eligible equipment please see

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, rve, milk, cheese, butter, vogurt, 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, loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You 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.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed

For more information, contact your Local County USDA Service Center or visit https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/facility-loans/farmstorage/index

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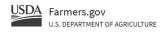








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