

May 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Mike Foster

From the State Executive Director

We hope you and your families are staying safe and healthy. In late April, Governor Bullock issued a [directive](#) outlining the phased reopening of Montana and establishing conditions for Phase One. USDA Service Centers in Montana remain **open** for business by phone appointment only until further notice. In order to support appropriate social distancing, we reduced the number of staff members working in each office. While **all** of our employees continue to work with our agricultural producers by phone, mail, email and online tools, some are working remotely. Field work continues with prior customer approval and appropriate distancing. The safety of our employees and Montana agriculture producers, who we have the privilege to serve, is the highest concern during

State Committee:

this time. Public notices will be issued when the status of USDA Service Centers in Montana change.

- Carl Mattson, *Chair* (Chester)
- Chaley Harney (Billings)
- Liane Johnson (Cut Bank)
- Bob Lee (Judith Gap)

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was recently signed into law and the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) was [announced](#) by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. At this time, we are awaiting specific information on how those funds will be distributed and we will be ready to help. For the latest updates on the CFAP, and other Frequently Asked Questions, visit usda.gov/coronavirus.

Policy Reminders:

[2020 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

In this newsletter, you'll find current programs and important signups that may assist your operations. FSA employees across Montana look forward to serving you.

To find contact information for your local office, visit:

www.farmers.gov.

Take Care,
Mike Foster

Join USDA in Following the #Plant2020 Progress

Spring planting is underway in Montana and we're following the progress as farmers complete field prep and plant their spring crops. We invite you to follow along or get involved by sharing your **#Plant2020** photos and videos. To view the **#Plant2020** progress, visit <https://arcg.is/1SmeuK>.

Small Business Administration's Agricultural Assistance

The new Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act provides additional resources for both the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. **Participation in SBA's PPP or EIDL program does not impact producer eligibility for USDA's forthcoming Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). There is no linkage between the two programs. Likewise, participation in SBA's PPP or EIDL program does not impact producer eligibility for any USDA farm program.** The PPP duplicate benefit provision does not have an impact on FSA farm programs or farm loan programs.

Paycheck Protection Program

The PPP is a guaranteed loan program administered by the SBA. The purpose of the program is to support small businesses and help support their payroll during the coronavirus situation.

Agricultural producers, farmers, and ranchers with 500 or fewer employees whose principal place of residence is in the United States are eligible.

Farms are eligible if:

- the farm has 500 or less employees, **OR**
- it fits within the revenue-based sized standard, which is on average annual receipts of \$1M.

Additionally, farms can qualify for PPP if it meets SBA's "alternative size standard." The "alternative size standard" is currently:

- a maximum net worth of the business not more than \$15 million, **AND**
- the average net income Federal income taxes of the business for the two full fiscal years before the date of the application be not more than \$5 million.

Small agricultural cooperatives may receive PPP loans as long as other eligibility requirements are met. Other forms of cooperatives may be eligible provided they comply with all other Loan Program Requirements (as defined in 13 CFR 120.10).

In regard to H-2A or H-2B workers on payroll, only employees with a principal place of residence in the U.S. count toward eligibility and calculation of the PPP loan amount.

SBA requires sole proprietors, independent contractors, and other eligible self-employed individuals to provide documentation to its lender that the business was in operation as of February 15, 2020. This documentation may include payroll processor records, payroll tax filings, or Form 1099-MISC, or income and expenses from a sole proprietorship. For borrowers that do not have any such documentation, the borrower must provide other supporting documentation to its lender, such as bank records, sufficient to demonstrate the qualifying payroll amount.

Documentation options for payroll tax filings include the following:

- IRS Form 941 (quarterly wages);
- IRS Form 944 (calendar year wages);
- State income, payroll and unemployment insurance filings;
- QuickBooks;
- bank repository accounts; and/or
- internally generated profit and loss statements.

Some additional notes include:

- Nonprofit organizations must include IRS Form 990;
- Sole proprietors must include IRS Form 1040 Schedule C;
- Any entity that filed IRS Form 1099-MISC must include this form;
- Seasonal employers must document the period beginning February 15, 2019 through June 30, 2019

More extensive FAQs can be found at the Treasury Department's [CARES Act website](#).

Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, small business owners in all U.S. states, Washington D.C., and territories are eligible to apply for an EIDL advance of up to \$10,000 and borrow up to \$2 million. This advance will provide economic relief to businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. Loan advances will not have to be repaid.

For the first time, agricultural enterprises are now eligible for the disaster assistance from EIDL.

For more information, visit [sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov).

Important FSA Dates to Remember for Montana Producers

Montana producers are reminded of the following FSA dates and deadlines. Contact your local FSA office for assistance.

- **March 23:** Signup Began for Excess Moisture and Drought (D-3 & Above) Losses Under WHIP+. *Deadline TBD.*
- **May 14:** Last day of 2020 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Spring Non-Emergency Grazing Period (*prior approval required*)
- **May 15:** Last day of CRP Grasslands Signup
- **May 15 to July 15:** Montana's Primary Nesting Season. Non-Emergency Grazing (*prior approval required*) is now allowed with a 50 percent reduction in the stocking rate.
- **June 1:** Last day to apply for a 2019 crop marketing assistance loan or LDP for harvested Corn, Dry Peas, Grain Sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Rice, Safflower Seed, Chickpeas, Soybeans and Sunflower Seed.
- **June 15:** Nominations Open for 2020 FSA County Committee Elections
- **June 30:** Last day of 2020 Agricultural Risk Coverage Price Loss Coverage Enrollment Period
- **July 15:** 2020 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, CRP, Perennial Forage not covered under NAP, Annually Seeded Spring Crops, and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date. *Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2019 reports for these crops.*
- **July 16:** First day of 2020 CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Grazing and Harvesting Periods (*prior approval required*)
- **Aug. 3:** Last day to file nominations for 2020 FSA County Committee Elections to FSA (or postmarked)
- **Aug. 3:** Deadline to request a farm reconstitution or farm transfer for 2020.
- **Aug. 15:** 2020 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Hemp
- **Aug. 21:** Last day of Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) Pilot Signup Period
- **Aug. 31:** Last day of 2020 CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Harvesting Period (*prior approval required*)
- **Aug. 31:** All Hay Bales Must be Removed from Non-Emergency Conservation Reserve Program Acreage
- **Sept. 1:** 2021 NAP Coverage Application Closing Date for all Canola (Winter and Spring Seeded) and Value-Loss Crops such as Nursery, Christmas Trees, Grass Sod, Ginseng, Aquaculture, Floriculture, Root Stock Sets and Mushrooms
- **Sept. 30:** Deadline to update PLC payment yields
- **Sept. 30:** 2021 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline for Annual Fall-Seeded Crops, Perennial Forage and Grazing, Mixed Forage Crops (including spring seeded annual types of mixed forage), Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Garlic

USDA 2020 ARC-PLC Safety Net Enrollment Deadline June 30

USDA Reports Record Enrollment in Key Farm Safety-Net Programs

Producers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year, which is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a 5-year average. **USDA reminds producers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.**

Producers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office. Producers must enroll by **June 30** and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by **September 30**.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the 2019 crop year ARC and PLC programs to increased producer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill and to an increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres. Enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

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

For more information on ARC and PLC, download the [program fact sheet](#) or the [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. To locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

July 15th Deadline for FSA Maps - 2020 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification

USDA Farm Service Agency offices in Montana are currently open to phone and virtual appointments only; but can still work with producers on timely filing crop acreage reports. FSA staff can provide assistance over the phone, by email and through virtual meetings via a software program called Microsoft Teams.

The deadline for acreage certification is **July 15, 2020**, and applies to crops such as **spring alfalfa seed, CRP, perennial forage (not covered by NAP), annually spring seeded crops, and any other crop not reported by a previous deadline.**

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers, including livestock producers, must file an accurate crop acreage report by the deadline. FSA staff is available to assist producers in completing acreage reports and providing maps.

Certification plans may vary by office, so customers can assist FSA by:

- Paying close attention to email or mail from their county FSA office that outlines the process put in place for 2020 spring certification in their office and following the requested steps; and
- Keeping good records of what is planted, where and when it is planted, and ensuring that information is accurately reported on the maps and provided to FSA as soon as possible following the completion of planting.

Producers are encouraged to work with their county office to arrange for completing the certification process using available options. Upon receipt of completed maps, FSA will make software updates and contact the producer to obtain signatures on the FSA-578 to complete the certification process by the July 15 deadline. Crops not certified by this date may be subject to late-filed fees.

The following exceptions apply to the July 15 acreage reporting date:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting deadline, the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after the purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation to support the newly acquired land must be provided to the county office.
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the **earlier of** July 15, 2020 or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop.

Reporting Prevent Plant Acres: Producers also must report crop acreage that they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevent planted acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency. If you have acreage that was prevented from being planted, please notify your county office and they can assist you in completing this form.

Reporting Organic Crops: Producers who selected the "organic" option on their NAP application must report the applicable crop as organic and provide a copy of their current organic plan and recent written certification in effect from a certifying agency. Please note that if you have applied for organic certification and do not receive it before the acreage reporting deadline, you may provide the necessary information to FSA immediately upon receipt.

WHIP+: FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup

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

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

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

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

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

FSA Farm Loan Flexibilities

Farm loans are critical for annual operating and family living expenses, emergency needs and cash flow, especially in tough times. The Farm Service Agency is providing additional flexibilities to provide producers with credit options. We encourage direct loan applicants and borrowers to contact their county office to discuss these programs and any current, and future, temporary changes to farm loan deadlines and the loan servicing options available. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender.

Relaxing the Farm Loan-Making Process

FSA is relaxing the loan-making process, including:

- Extending the deadline for applicants to complete farm loan applications;
- Preparing Direct Loans documents even if FSA is unable to complete lien and record searches because of closed government buildings. Once those searches are complete, FSA would close the loan; and
- Closing loans if the required lien position on the primary security is perfected, even for loans that require additional security and those lien searches, filings and recordings cannot be obtained because of closed government buildings.

Servicing Direct Loans

FSA is extending deadlines for producers to respond to loan servicing actions, including loan deferral consideration for financially distressed and delinquent borrowers.

FSA will temporarily suspend loan accelerations, non-judicial foreclosures, and referring foreclosures to the Department of Justice. The U.S. Attorney's Office will make the determination whether to stop foreclosures and evictions on accounts under its jurisdiction.

Servicing Guaranteed Loans

Guarantee lenders can self-certify, providing their borrowers with:

- Subsequent-year operating loan advances on lines of credit;
- Emergency advances on lines of credit.

FSA will consider guaranteed lender requests for:

- Temporary payment deferral consideration when borrowers do not have a feasible plan reflecting that family living expenses, operating expenses and debt can be repaid; and
- Temporary forbearance consideration for borrowers on loan liquidation and foreclosure actions.

Contacting FSA

FSA will be accepting additional 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.

For more information, visit farmers.gov/fund and farmers.gov/coronavirus.

USDA Announces Loan Maturity for Marketing Assistance Loans Now Extended to 12 Months

Provides Producers with Marketing Flexibilities Amid COVID-19 Uncertainties

Agricultural producers now have more time to repay Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL) as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. The loans now mature at 12 months rather than nine, and this flexibility is available for most commodities.

Effective immediately, producers of eligible commodities now have up to 12 months to repay their commodity loans. The maturity extension applies to nonrecourse loans for crop years 2018, 2019 and 2020. Eligible open loans must in good standing with a maturity date of March 31, 2020, or later or new crop year (2019 or 2020) loans requested by September 30, 2020. All new loans requested by September 30, 2020, will have a maturity date 12 months following the date of approval.

The maturity extension for current, active loans will be automatically extended an additional 3 months. Loans that matured March 31 have already been automatically extended by USDA's Farm Service Agency. Producers who prefer a nine-month loan will need to contact their local FSA county office. Loans requested after September 30, 2020, will have a term of nine months.

Eligible commodities include barley, chickpeas (small and large), corn, cotton (upland and extra-long staple), dry peas, grain sorghum, honey, lentils, mohair, oats, peanuts, rice (long and medium grain), soybeans, unshorn pelts, wheat, wool (graded and nongraded); and other oilseeds, including canola, crambe, flaxseed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sunflower seed, and sesame seed. Seed cotton and sugar are not eligible.

About MALs

Placing commodities under loan provides producers interim financing to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are low and allows producers to store production for more orderly marketing of commodities throughout the year.

These loans are considered nonrecourse because the commodity is pledged as loan collateral, and producers have the option of delivering the pledged collateral to the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) for repayment of the outstanding loan at maturity.

MAL Repayment

Under the new maturity provisions, producers can still repay the loan as they would have before the extension:

- repay the MAL on or before the maturity date;
- upon maturity by delivering or forfeiting the commodity to CCC as loan repayment; or
- after maturity and before CCC acquires the farm-stored commodity by repaying the outstanding MAL principle and interest.

Marketing Loan Gains

A Marketing Loan Gain occurs when a MAL is repaid at less than the loan principal. If market gain is applicable during the now-extended loan period, producers can receive a gain on the repayment made before the loan matures.

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

CRP Grasslands Signup: May 15 Deadline

Farmers and ranchers may apply to enroll grasslands in the Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands signup beginning March 16. The signup runs through May 15.

Through CRP Grasslands, participants retain the right to conduct common practices, such as grazing, haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land. Timing of some activities may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds.

Participants will receive an annual rental payment and may receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices. The duration of the CRP contract is either 10 or 15 years. FSA will rank applications using a number of factors including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland, and predominance of native species cover, and cost.

The 2018 Farm Bill set aside 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment. CRP is one of the largest conservation programs at USDA. CRP marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020 with 22 million acres currently enrolled.

For more information or to enroll in CRP Grasslands, contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Conservation Pilot Program for Prairie Pothole Producers to Plant Perennial Cover Crops: Aug. 21 Deadline

The Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) is a land conservation program administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency.

USDA Farm Service Agency announced a new pilot program that enables farmers in Prairie Pothole states to receive payments for planting perennial cover crops on their land for three to five years. The new Conservation Reserve Program Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) pilot is available to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, **Montana**, North Dakota and South Dakota. The signup for this pilot started March 30 and ends **August 21**.

Through SHIPP, producers have the option of three-, four- or five-year CRP contracts to establish perennial cover crops on less productive cropland in exchange for payments. This pilot enables producers to plant perennial cover crops that, among other benefits, will improve soil health and water quality while having the option to harvest, hay and graze during certain times of the year. Up to 50,000 acres can be enrolled.

Perennial cover crops, whether used in a single crop rotation or over multiple years, can improve the productivity of soils and soil health on a farm for generations and increase the bottom line for the farmer. Soil health, or soil quality, by definition, is the capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.

The SHIPP pilot is the latest option in a full suite of opportunities available to producers through CRP and other conservation programs offered by USDA. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to talk to their FSA county office soon about whether this pilot fits their operation or consider another longer-term option such as the CRP General signup that ended February 28 or CRP Continuous signup that is ongoing.

For more information, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp and contact your local office. To find your local USDA Service Center office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator>.

2020 CRP Non-Emergency Harvesting and Grazing

Spring Non-Emergency Grazing: Livestock must be removed from CRP by May 14, unless approved for grazing during the Primary Nesting Season of May 15 to July 15

The Conservation Reserve Program 2020 Spring Non-Emergency Grazing Period is March 1 to May 14. Livestock must be removed when the calculated AUMs have been utilized but no later than May 14th. Grazing is now available during the Primary Nesting Season, but is subject to a 50 percent reduction in stocking rate.

The CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Harvesting Period begins July 16 following Montana's Primary Nesting Season and ends no later than Aug. 31. Summer/Fall Grazing Period begins July 16 and ends when the calculated AUMs have been utilized or no later than Nov. 1.

Producers are reminded to sign up at their local FSA office and complete a CRP-117 form for FSA office approval before conducting any non-emergency harvesting and/or grazing activity.

Guaranteed Conservation Loans

[Guaranteed Conservation Loans](#) are available for applicants to install a conservation practice. These funds may be used for any conservation activities included in a conservation plan or Forest Stewardship Management plan. A copy of the conservation plan is required to complete the application. These loans are not limited to just family farmers. In some cases, applicants can operate non-eligible enterprises. Loan funds are issued by a participating commercial lender and guaranteed up to 80 percent by FSA or up to 90 percent for beginning and historically underserved producers.

FSA Disaster Notice of Loss Requirements

It's important for agricultural producers to report losses immediately as all disaster programs are dependent on the timely reporting of the loss. A notice of loss can be filed with USDA Farm Service Agency via phone, email, or fax.

- **ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program:** 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.
- **LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **30** calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. (See full article below.)
- **NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **15** calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date. **Note:** A producer's signature is required on form CCC-576 when a Notice of Loss is submitted. (See full article below.)
- **TAP - Tree Assistance Program:** Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation within 90 calendar days of: the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent to the producer.

Contact the local FSA office for assistance and visit FSA online at www.fsa.usda.gov/mt and/or www.farmers.gov.

Timely Filing a NAP Notice of Loss

Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must timely report damage or loss to their administrative County Office. For all low yield and value-loss crop claims, a CCC-576 Part B Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of earlier of the date disaster occurs (or becomes apparent) or the normal harvest date. However, all producers should be aware that deadlines to provide initial notice to FSA do now vary by method of harvest and crop.

Crops that are either hand-harvested or other crops determined by FSA to deteriorate quickly and therefore need prompt appraisal must notify FSA within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This initial notice may be by the filing of the CCC-576 Part B, e-mail, FAX, or a phone call. When initial notice is by email, FAX, or phone, County Offices will provide a Receipt for Service with additional requirements. A **signed CCC-576 Notice of Loss** will still be required within 15 calendar days of earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

Other crops, such as forages and grains, continue to have the 15 day requirement to file a required *CCC-576, Notice of Loss*, to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. This Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of the earlier of date of occurrence/appearance of damage or harvest date.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 Part B must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Further, to receive NAP assistance for claimed losses producers **must** timely file an Application for Payment on CCC-576 (Parts D through H) along with all required production records. Each producer on the unit must file their own application for payment. The deadline to apply for payment is 60 calendar days after the end of coverage for the crop year on the unit. There are no late-file provisions for NAP Applications for Payment.

Livestock Losses

Montana livestock producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster. The [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), administered by USDA Farm Service Agency, provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather,

disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

In addition, LIP provides assistance for injured livestock that are sold within 30 days of an eligible loss condition at a reduced price due to adverse weather or attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For livestock death losses, eligible livestock owners must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. Producers should document the adverse weather conditions and date(s) of weather events.

Participants must provide all supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. Livestock owners and contract growers must record all pertinent information, including the number and kind of all livestock adversely impacted. Some examples of required supporting documentation include:

- **Beginning Inventory Records**
- **Proof of death loss documentation**
- **Purchase and sales records**
- **Calving records (include date of birth, date of death and cause of death)**
- **Preg test records (completed by 3rd party)**
- **Copy of growers contracts**
- **Proof of normal mortality documentation**

2020 Livestock Losses: In addition to filing a timely notice of loss, producers must submit an application for payment and all supporting documentation by **March 2, 2021**.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: fsa.usda.gov/mt or farmers.gov.

USDA Offers Individuals Options to Complete Business Online

Farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers have online options to access USDA programs, including Farm Service Agency's Agriculture Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC), Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs), producer farm data such as Common Land Unit data through [FSAfarm+](https://fsafarmplus.com), farm loan, WHIP, and WHIP+ information through the farmers.gov portal, and conservation program and practice information through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's [Conservation Client Gateway](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-client-gateway). Online options are available to users with a secure Level 2 eAuthentication ID.

Through the [FSA website](https://fsa.usda.gov), you can:

- Request Loan Deficiency Payments through eLDP;
- Choose a payment option, assign crop shares, and sign and submit ARC/PLC contracts online, as well as view and print submitted contracts;
- View your FSA data on FSAfarm+, including farm records data and maps.

Through the farmers.gov portal, you can:

- View farm loans information, history, and payments for USDA farm loans;
- Prepare to enroll in the 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP), and track your application;
- Prepare to enroll in the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) which helps agricultural producers affected by natural disasters in 2018 and 2019.

Through the NRCS [Conservation Client Gateway](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-client-gateway), you can:

- Track NRCS payments;
- Report completed practices;
- Request conservation assistance, and
- Electronically sign documents.

The functionalities of FSAfarm+ and Conservation Client Gateway are being transitioned to farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where customers can apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

But for now, the portals must be accessed individually depending on the service.

Producers doing business as an individual with these agencies 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.

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!

1. Contact your local service center to confirm you have a USDA customer record with a primary email address. Use our [Service Center Locator](#) to find your local office.
2. Navigate to the [eAuth Account Registration page](#).
3. Select "Customer" on the registration page.
4. Enter your primary email address, which should match what USDA has on your customer record. You will receive an email from eAuth asking you to confirm your email address. Click the "Continue Registration" link in this email to continue the registration process. *Note: When you log in, your User ID will be your email address.*
5. Next, enter your name and set a password.
6. Finally, you will need to verify your identity. You will be taken to a page where you will need to provide information such as your date of birth and residential address, and then can verify your identity online. If you are unable to verify your identity online, contact your local USDA Service Center.

For technical assistance, call the eAuthentication help desk at 1-800-457-3642.

USDA Announces Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

\$3 Million Available in Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

USDA announced the availability of \$3 million for grants through its new Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until midnight **July 6, 2020**.

Planning Projects

\$1 million is available for Planning Projects that initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. Projects may target areas of food access; education; business and start-up costs for new farmers; and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.

Implementation Projects

\$2 million is available for Implementation Projects that accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers. Projects will improve local food access and collaborate with partner organizations and may support infrastructure needs; emerging technologies; educational endeavors; and urban farming policy development.

Webinar

A webinar will be held on **June 3, 2020 from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m.** Mountain Standard Time. The webinar will provide an overview of the grants' purpose, project types, eligibility, and basic requirements for the submission of an application. Information on how participate in the webinar, or listen to the recording, will be posted on the farmers.gov/urban webpage.

More Information

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Technology was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on July 6, 2020. More information is available at farmers.gov/urban.

Montana Farm and Ranch Stress Resource Clearinghouse

Montana State University Extension and an associated statewide advisory council have developed an online clearinghouse of resources for a wide range of topics related to stress and mental health. The clearinghouse was created specifically for ag producers and their families, but it contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning more about causes of stress, stress prevention and management, and overall mental health. To access the site, please click on this link: https://msuextension.org/wellness/stress-management/mt_farm_stress_clearing_house/.

Reasonable Accommodations: Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in FSA meetings should contact the County Executive Director at their local county office or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 at least two business days prior to the meeting. Alternatively, you may contact Montana FSA State Civil Rights Coordinator at jennifer.cole@usda.gov or 406.654.1333, ext. 117.

Questions? Contact your [local FSA office](#).

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).