

January 2021



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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-
- [Montana FSA Program Deadlines](#)
 - [Enrollment Deadline March 15 for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021](#)
 - [USDA CRP General Signup: January 4 to February 12](#)
 - [Quality Loss Assistance Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2018, 2019 Natural Disasters: March 5 Deadline](#)
 - [2020 Livestock Forage Disaster Program Triggered in Seven Montana Counties - Feb. 1 Application Deadline](#)
 - [Register Today for the 2021 MT Next Generation Conference](#)
 - [USDA NRCS Sets Agricultural Conservation Easement Application Cutoff Date for Feb 5](#)
 - [USDA Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules Unchanged in 2018 Farm Bill](#)
 - [Ongoing FSA Notice of Loss Requirements](#)
 - [Livestock Losses](#)
 - [USDA Seafood Trade Relief Program Deadline: Jan. 15](#)
 - [USDA Seeks Members for Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture](#)
 - [Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information](#)
 - [Direct Loans](#)
 - [Guaranteed Loan Program](#)
 - [Emergency Loans Available in Montana Disaster Areas](#)
 - [Montana Farm and Ranch Stress Resource Clearinghouse](#)

Montana FSA: January 2021 Newsletter

Montana USDA Customers Encouraged to Call Ahead to Confirm Local Service Center Status

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is temporarily restricting in-person visits for numerous Service Centers in Montana because of elevated rates of coronavirus community spread, but USDA employees will continue to assist agricultural producers with programs and services.

USDA is using a phased, data-driven approach to determine which Service Centers are open for in-person appointments. Field work, including conservation planning assistance, will continue with appropriate social distancing. All USDA Service Centers are open for business, and Service Center staff members from FSA and NRCS will continue to work with producers by phone, email, and digital tools like Microsoft Teams, Box, and OneSpan. Producers can learn more about how to leverage these digital offerings by visiting <https://www.farmers.gov/mydocs>.

Producers wishing to conduct business with the FSA, NRCS, or any other Service Center agency should call ahead to confirm and schedule appointments. More information on Service Center status can be found at <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status>, and contact information for local Service Centers is available at <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>.

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Chaley Harney (Billings)
Liane Johnson (Cut Bank)
Bob Lee (Judith Gap)
Gene Curry (Valier)

Policy Reminders: [2020 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

To find contact information for your local office, visit: www.farmers.gov.

Montana FSA Program Deadlines

Below is the list of upcoming program deadlines. Contact your local FSA office to sign up and with any questions.

Jan. 15: Deadline to sign up for the [Seafood Trade Relief Program \(STRP\)](#)

Jan. 16: 2021 Acreage Reporting Deadline Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed and Cherries. *Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2020 reports for these crops.*

Jan. 30: 2020 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline for timely filed 2020 ELAP notices of losses

Feb. 1: Final availability date for Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) for prior year harvested peanuts, wool, mohair and LDP only for unshorn pelts

Feb. 1: Deadline for the 2020 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application and all supporting documentation

Feb. 5: NRCS [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) Application Cutoff Date in Montana

Feb. 12: Last day of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Signup

March 1: Deadline for the 2020 Livestock Indemnity Program Application for Payment and all supporting documentation for timely filed 2020 LIP notices of livestock losses.

March 5: Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program Signup Deadline

March 15: 2021 ARC-PLC Election and Enrollment Deadline

March 15: 2021 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) Coverage Application Closing Date for all Spring Crops except Spring-Seeded Canola, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Mixed Forage

March 15: CRP Grassland Signup begins and will end on April 23

March 31: Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for prior year harvested Wheat, Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, and Sesame Seed

Enrollment Deadline March 15 for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs for 2021

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The signup period opened Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2021 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for 2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election will be the same as the election in the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

2019 Crop Year ARC and PLC Payments

FSA began processing payments in October for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) payments began in November.

Producers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, safflower, sunflower seed, rapeseed, flax, seed cotton and wheat.

Oats, mustard seed, crambe, sesame seed and soybeans did not meet 2019 PLC payment triggers.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), the Texas A&M tool allows producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2021. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data already available in the system.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, including two online decision tools that assist producers in making enrollment and election decisions specific to their operations, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#).

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA CRP General Signup: January 4 to February 12

Agricultural producers and private landowners interested in the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) can sign up for the popular program beginning, Jan. 4, 2021, until Feb. 12, 2021. The competitive program, administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to their local region and the nation's environment and economy. CRP general signup is held annually and is competitive; general signup includes increased opportunities for wildlife habitat enrollment through the [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#) initiative.

New cropland offered in the program must have been planted for four out of six crop years from 2012 to 2017.

Additionally, producers with land already enrolled but expiring on Sept. 30, 2021, can re-enroll this year. The acreage offered by producers and landowners is evaluated competitively; accepted offers will begin Oct. 1, 2021.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The program marked its [35-year anniversary](#) in December 2020. Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks.
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95% and 85%, respectively.
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road.
- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times.
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

Quality Loss Assistance Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2018, 2019 Natural Disasters: March 5 Deadline

Deadline to apply for QLA is March 5, 2021

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that signup for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program will begin Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. Funded by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, this new program provides assistance to producers who suffered eligible crop quality losses due to natural disasters occurring in 2018 and 2019. The deadline to apply for QLA is Friday, March 5, 2021.

Eligible Crops

Eligible crops include those for which [federal crop insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) coverage is available, except for grazed crops and value loss crops, such as honey, maple sap, aquaculture, floriculture, mushrooms, ginseng root, ornamental nursery, Christmas trees, and turfgrass sod.

Additionally, crops that were sold or fed to livestock or that are in storage may be eligible; however, crops that were destroyed before harvest are not eligible. Crop quality losses occurring after harvest, due to deterioration in storage, or that could have been mitigated, are also not eligible.

Assistance is based on a producer's harvested affected production of an eligible crop, which must have had at least a 5% quality loss reflected through a quality discount; or for forage crops, a nutrient loss, such as total digestible nutrients.

Qualifying Disaster Events

Losses must have been a result of a qualifying disaster event (hurricane, excessive moisture, flood, qualifying drought, tornado, typhoon, volcanic activity, snowstorm, or wildfire) or related condition that occurred in calendar years 2018 and/or 2019.

Assistance is available for eligible producers in counties that received a qualifying Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation because of one or more of the qualifying disaster events or related conditions.

Lists of counties with Presidential Emergency Disaster Declarations and Secretarial Disaster Designations for all qualifying disaster events for 2018 and 2019 are available [here](#). For drought, producers are eligible for QLA if the loss occurred in an area within a county rated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) as having a D3 (extreme drought) or higher intensity level during 2018 or 2019.

Producers in counties that did not receive a qualifying declaration or designation may still apply but must also provide supporting documentation to establish that the crop was directly affected by a qualifying disaster event.

To determine QLA eligibility and payments, FSA considers the total quality loss caused by all qualifying natural disasters in cases where a crop was impacted by multiple events.

Applying for QLA

When applying, producers are asked to provide verifiable documentation to support claims of quality loss or nutrient loss in the case of forage crops. For crops that have been sold, grading must have been completed within 30 days of harvest, and for forage crops, a laboratory analysis must have been completed within 30 days of harvest.

Some acceptable forms of documentation include sales receipts from buyers, settlement sheets, truck or warehouse scale tickets, written sales contracts, similar records that represent actual and specific quality loss information, and forage tests for nutritional values.

Payments Calculations and Limitations

QLA payments are based on formulas for the type of crop (forage or non-forage) and loss documentation submitted. Based on this documentation FSA is calculating payments based on the producer's own individual loss or based on the county average loss. More information on payments can be found on farmers.gov/quality-loss.

FSA will issue payments once the application period ends. If the total amount of calculated QLA payments exceeds available program funding, payments will be prorated.

For each crop year, 2018, 2019 and 2020, the maximum amount that a person or legal entity may receive, directly or indirectly, is \$125,000. Payments made to a joint operation (including a general partnership or joint venture) will not exceed \$125,000, multiplied by the number of persons and legal entities that comprise the ownership of the joint operation. A person or legal entity is ineligible for QLA payment if the person's or legal entity's average Adjusted Gross Income exceeds \$900,000, unless at least 75% is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers receiving QLA Program payments are required to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. Wildlife and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) participants who already met the WHIP+ requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage are considered to

have thereby met the requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for QLA. If eligible, QLA participants may meet the insurance purchase requirement by purchasing [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) coverage offered through USDA's Risk Management Agency.

More Information

For more information, visit farmers.gov/quality-loss, or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364.

2020 Livestock Forage Disaster Program Triggered in Seven Montana Counties - Feb. 1 Application Deadline

Livestock producers in Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan & Powder River counties eligible for 2020 LFP

Producers in **Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan & Powder River counties** are now eligible to apply for 2020 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, and/or improved pasture.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. At this time, **Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Powder River, Rosebud, Roosevelt and Sheridan counties** are the only Montana counties that has met the drought criteria for LFP eligibility. You must complete a CCC-853 and submit the required supporting documentation no later than **Feb. 1, 2021**, for 2020 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock, contact their local county office and visit fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Register Today for the 2021 MT Next Generation Conference

The 2021 Montana's Next Generation Conference will provide six powerful evening sessions covering crops, livestock, family communication, business planning, and succession planning topics. Sessions will be on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m., beginning January 12. All sessions will be broadcast and accessible online. Sessions will be free, but registration is required at <https://mtnextgen.com/>. Registration opened mid-December and remains open.

Participation in all six workshops along with a completed evaluation and passing a test over the material covered will satisfy FSA's borrower training requirements.

Sessions will be as follows:

Jan. 12 – Lacy Roberts, Glacier County Farm Loan Manager, will start the night off with **Beginning Financial and Production Recordkeeping**. She will cover the basics of developing a balance sheet and cash flow along with how to keep track of income and expenses. Dr. Mykel Taylor will build on this in the second session by taking the financials you have developed and making strategic management decisions based on your financial records.

Jan. 14 – Dallas Mount (Ranching for Profit) will build on Jan. 12 concepts as he along with three producers he has worked with will delve into how they generated more profit from their farming and ranching enterprises by developing new income streams and closing unprofitable enterprises. This will be a great opportunity to hear from producers on how they have put their financial management into action.

Jan. 19 – All Things Marketing – Domenic Varricchio from Roach Ag Marketing will delve into developing a farm and ranch marketing plan using futures and options along with giving an overview of the 2021 marketing opportunities on the

horizon. This will be followed by Shane Eaton, co-owner of Eaton Charolais Ranch at Lindsay, MT. Shane will share how their family operation is four generations strong utilizing a robust marketing plan for their 1,500 head of registered Charolais and 1,500 commercial cattle. The family operation also operates multiple feedlots in Montana and North Dakota to feed their cattle along with their customer's cattle, which has required an active marketing plan.

Jan. 21 – Cattle Nutrition will be the topic of the night. MSU Extension Beef Specialist Dr. Carla Sanford will start the evening off with focusing on how third trimester nutrition and fetal programming tie together. Dr. Brian Vander Ley, veterinary epidemiologist at the Great Plains Veterinary Educational Center in Clay Center, NE will follow. Dr. Vander Lay will cover beginning calf nutrition and importance of colostrum in a new calf and long-term effects when this important building block is missed.

Jan. 26 – You will not want to miss this dynamic and high energy evening with Teton County MSU Extension Agent Jane Wolery and MSU Extension Specialist Dr. Marsha Goetting. Jane will lead the evening off with **"FENCES – Families Engaging Nicely in Communicating ExpectationS"**. A farm girl at heart, Jane will share how important communication is in moving your family operation forward and having effective lines of communication. This will lead into how to start those succession and estate planning conversations that Dr. Goetting will share are a must have.

Jan. 28 – Legal Horror Stories and Taxes - what a combination! Brian Lee from Lee Law Office will start the evening off with his favorite legal agreement stories gone wrong and how ag businesses can ensure their agreements say what they mean and mean what they say. Brittney Tempel with Wipfli will follow with updates in the tax world and how these will be important for our farm and ranch producers across the area.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this event should contact Lacy Roberts at (406) 873-5618 or Federal Relay Service at 1 (800) 877-8339.

Please note producers who are completing these classes for FSA borrower training credit can also substitute in nights with the Pondera County Extension Office's Master Farmer classes that will be running Thursday evenings in January and February. For a full list of these classes, please contact Adriane Good at adriane.good@montana.edu.

USDA NRCS Sets Agricultural Conservation Easement Application Cutoff Date for Feb 5

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Montana is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). While NRCS accepts easement applications on a continuous basis, applications for the next funding consideration must be submitted by February 5, 2021.

ACEP Agricultural Land Easements provide financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing easements that project the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranches keep their land in agriculture.

ACEP Wetlands Reserve Easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS, call your local USDA Service Center or visit www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov.

USDA Fruit, Vegetable and Wild Rice Planting Rules Unchanged in 2018 Farm Bill

Fruit, vegetable and wild rice producers will continue to follow the same rules for certain Farm Service Agency programs.

If you intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts, vegetables or wild rice are planted on payment acres

of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits, vegetables or wild rice on acres not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits, vegetables and wild rice for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables and wild rice on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on more than 15 percent of the base acres of an ARC enrolled farm using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of an ARC enrolled farm using the individual coverage.

Fruits, vegetables and wild rice that are planted in a double-cropping practice will not cause a payment reduction if the farm is in a double-cropping region as designated by the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Ongoing FSA Notice of Loss Requirements

It's important for agricultural producers to report losses immediately as [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, fax or in-person office visit.

- **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 livestock loss is first apparent.
- **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.
- **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.

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 1, 2021**, which is 60 days after the end of the calendar year.

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

USDA Seafood Trade Relief Program Deadline: Jan. 15

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 commercially licensed 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.

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 **the extended deadline of January 15, 2021**. 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.

USDA Seeks Members for Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking members for a new advisory committee on urban agriculture, part of a broader effort to focus on the needs of urban farmers. The 12-person committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices as well as identify any barriers to urban agriculture.

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise, including:

- Four agricultural producers (two agricultural producers in an urban area or urban cluster and two agricultural producers who use innovative technology).
- Two representatives from an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One representative of a nonprofit organization, which may include a public health, environmental or community organization.
- One representative of business and economic development, which may include a business development entity, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.
- One individual from a financing entity.
- Two individuals with related experience or expertise in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices, as determined by the Secretary.
- The 2018 Farm Bill established the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and directed USDA to form this advisory committee as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture. It is led by the NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction. More information is available in this notice on the Federal Register or at farmers.gov/urban.
- Nominations should include a cover letter, resume and a [background form](#). Nomination packages must be submitted by mail or email by March 5, 2021. They should be addressed to Ronald Harris, Designated Federal Officer, Director of Outreach and Partnerships, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 6006-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, or emailed to Ronald.Harris@usda.gov.
- Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership. Self-nominations are also welcome.

Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information

It is important to promptly report any changes in your farming operation to FSA. These changes can include, but are not limited to, changes in your address, phone, or email, name changes, changes to entity membership or shares, formation or dissolution of any entity (such as a trust, partnership, LLC, LLP or corporation) that owns or operates land or owns other farming assets used in your operation, sale or purchase of land, adding or dropping leases, and any changes to financing or equipment. Participants in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to their local FSA office in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan with necessary changes, as applicable. Failure to timely notify your local FSA office may result in ineligibility for program benefits, or delays in issuance of program payments. If you have any updates or corrections to your records, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

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. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

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.

Guaranteed Loan Program

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,750,000. 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 lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

Emergency Loans Available in Montana Disaster Areas

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. **Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the [Farm Loan Program staff serving your area](#).**

[Current Disaster Designations in Montana - \(by county\)](#) [Emergency Loans Website](#)

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/

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).
