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A Message from the FSA State Executive Director

It's been good to see so many combines out in the fields as harvest gets into full swing across the state. Please be safe as you work to bring your crops in over the next month.

Even as harvest starts, there also has been some planting going on. Our Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices will be ready to take your acreage certification information as you finish getting your fall-seeded crops in the ground. You can start the process now by contacting your FSA office to schedule your certification appointment. Some already are in the process of sending out maps for you to complete as you plant. Please note you also can certify any newly-planted cover crop acres at this time.

Our offices also continue to be busy with drought disaster programs. The triggering mechanism for the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) and the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP) is the U.S. Drought Monitor. As of this writing, 66 counties in Nebraska are eligible for these programs. Counties can continue to trigger through the end of the Nebraska grazing season, which for FSA program purposes is Oct. 15. If you have both grazing livestock and grazing land and have been impacted by the drought, contact your county FSA office and ask about these important assistance programs.

Some of you may have heard USDA's recent, exciting announcement about new Climate Smart Ag programs with the awarding of 70 Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities pilot projects. These projects will be carried out by a variety of USDA partners from nonprofit organizations; corporations; and government entities, to farmer cooperatives; conservation, energy and environmental groups; and universities. These parties will be using \$2.8 billion of grant funds to:

- Provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on a voluntary basis on working lands;
- Pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and
- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Nebraska was listed in 18 of these projects, and these projects included mention of everything from corn, soybeans, wheat and sugarbeets, to beef, pork, poultry and dairy production, among others. The likely questions you may have are: Now what? How can I learn more? With an historic investment of this type, there are still many details yet to come. I am excited to learn more as well. While it will be the types of groups listed above, not Farm Service Agency, who will be implementing these projects, I'll do my best to share more information as it is made known. It's an exciting time as these Climate Smart Commodities pilot projects allow USDA to recognize, reward and encourage conservation efforts that are good for your farming and ranching operations but that also are a benefit to us all.

That's all I've got for this month. Be safe with harvest and talk to you next month.

--John Berge

Drought Assistance for 2022 Livestock Forage Losses Available in 66 Nebraska Counties

Producers in 66 Nebraska counties are eligible to apply for 2022 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits. Benefits may be available for small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass, or forage sorghum, depending on the county.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned land, leased land where the producer has risk in the grazing or fire on federally managed land.

FSA county committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is provided from FSA headquarters of qualifying drought conditions as determined by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing livestock on normally permitted federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

Click [here](#) for a list of counties that are eligible for LFP. This list is updated weekly. Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide the required supporting documentation before program benefits can be determined and issued. The deadline to apply for 2022 losses is Jan. 30, 2023.

For additional information about LFP, including eligibility criteria for producers and livestock, contact your county FSA office or visit farmers.gov/recover.

FSA Reminds Producers of Fall-Seeded Acreage Reporting Requirement, Deadline

To comply with program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to contact their county FSA office to file an accurate acreage certification report by the applicable deadline.

Producers who file accurate and timely acreage certification reports, including failed and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the potential loss of USDA program benefits. The acreage reporting deadline for all fall-seeded crops is Nov. 15, 2022. Producers also are encouraged to report fall-planted cover crops at this time.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the date listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions regarding acreage certification, please contact your county FSA office.

FSA Accepting Applications to Help Producers with Certification Costs for Organic, Transitioning to Organic

Agricultural producers and handlers who are certified organic, along with producers and handlers who are transitioning to organic production, can now apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program](#) (OTECP) and [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), which help producers and handlers cover the cost of organic certification, along with other related expenses. Applications for OTECP and OCCSP are both due October 31, 2022.

OTECP covers:

- Certification costs for organic producers and handlers (25% up to \$250 per category).
- Eligible expenses for transitional producers, including fees for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan (75% up to \$750).
- Registration fees for educational events (75% up to \$200).
- Soil testing (75% up to \$100).

Meanwhile, OCCSP covers 50% or up to \$500 per category of certification costs in 2022.

This cost share for certification is available for each of these categories: crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling and State organic program fees.

Producers can receive cost share through both OTECP and OCCSP. Both OTECP and OCCSP cover costs incurred from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022. Producers have until October 31, 2022 to file applications, and FSA will make payments as applications are received.

To apply, producers and handlers should contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at their local USDA Service Center. As part of completing the OCCSP applications, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses.

Additional details can be found on the [OTECP](#) and [OCCSP](#) webpages.

USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA's Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer's personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit farmers.gov/mydocs to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

FSA Reminds Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage for Non-insurable Crops

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

NAP application deadlines can vary by county and by crop. NAP application deadlines for coverage in the 2023 production season are approaching and include:

- Rye, triticale and wheat: Sept. 30, 2022
- Alfalfa, mixed forages and grass: Nov. 15, 2022
- Apples, aronia berries and grapes: Nov. 20, 2022

Producers interested in NAP are encouraged to contact their county FSA office for more information ahead of the deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by federal crop insurance may be eligible for NAP. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops. NAP can protect against losses associated with lower yields, destroyed crops or prevented planting.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested. The buy-up coverage can be from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Producers qualifying as beginning, underserved, or limited resource farmers

or those who can meet eligibility requirements as a military veteran are eligible for free catastrophic (basic) level of NAP coverage, as well as the potential for reduction in buy-up premiums.

To learn more about NAP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Buying or Selling Land? Changing Banks? Maintain Your Records With FSA

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file to our office.

You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a Trust, LLC or other legal entity.

FSA and NRCS program participants are required to promptly report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and to update their *Farm Operating Plan* on form CCC-902.

To update your records, contact your county FSA office.

Reminders for FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security

Farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans are responsible for maintaining loan collateral. Borrowers must obtain prior consent or approval from FSA or the guaranteed lender for any transaction that affects real estate security. These transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind
- Easements of any kind
- Subordinations
- Partial releases
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#).

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland, Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations.

Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your county FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

FSA September Loan Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 4.125%

Microloan Operating: 4.125%

Farm Ownership: 4.375%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.750%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 3.125%

5-year term: 2.875%

7-year term: 2.875%

10-year term: 2.750%

12-year term: 2.875%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 4.125%

Deadline to Apply for Natural Resource Conservation Funds Approaching



Farmers and ranchers interested in preventing erosion, improving soil health, conserving water and wildlife, or making other natural resource conservation improvements to their property are encouraged to apply now for funding available from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Those interested in receiving funding should sign up before Nov. 18, 2022.

NRCS has a whole suite of conservation programs available to farmers and ranchers looking for assistance in improving and protecting the natural resources on their ag land. These programs provide funding on cropland and rangeland, as well as for establishing or enhancing wildlife habitat and wetlands. NRCS has over 150 conservation practices available, and staff can work with landowners to identify the options that best suit their operation's needs.

The most widely applied conservation programs in Nebraska are the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The goal of these conservation programs is to provide a financial incentive to encourage landowners to install conservation practices that protect natural resources, resulting in cleaner air and water, healthy soil, and more wildlife habitat.

Individuals interested in applying for these conservation programs may do so at any time, but applications need to be submitted by Nov. 18 to be considered for this year's funding. For more information about conservation programs and other assistance available, call [your local NRCS field office](#) or visit www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.

New Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers

A new multi-agency guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available. If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet ([click here to access online](#)) to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you. This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency.

The guide is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on farmers.gov/translations.

Dates to Remember

Sept. 30, 2022 – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) application closing deadline for coverage for rye, triticale, wheat in the 2023 production season

Oct. 10, 2022 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Oct. 31, 2022 – FSA deadline for applications to the Organic Certification Cost Share Program and the Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program

Nov. 1, 2022 – Ballots mailed to eligible voters for the FSA County Committee election

Nov. 15, 2022 – FSA acreage reporting deadline for fall-seeded crops for 2023 program eligibility

Nov. 15, 2022 – ***FSA NAP application closing deadline for coverage for alfalfa, mix forages and grass in the 2023 production season

Nov. 18, 2022 – NRCS deadline

***Please note any above NAP calendar reference may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.



Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Information

Farm Service Agency

7131 A Street
Lincoln, NE 68510
Phone: (402) 437-5581
Fax: (844) 930-0237

John Berge, FSA

State Executive Director
john.berge@usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service

100 Centennial Mall North, Suite 152
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 437-5300

Robert Lawson, NRCS

State Conservationist
robert.lawson@usda.gov

FSA State Office Programs Chiefs

Cathy Anderson, *Production & Compliance*
Pat Lechner, *Price Support & Conservation*
Mark Wilke, *Farm Loans*
Tim Divis, *Executive Officer*
Patty Wilke, *Administrative Officer*

FSA State Committee

Roy Stoltenberg, *Cairo, Chair*
Bill Armbrust, *Elkhorn*
Aaron LaPointe, *Winnebago*
Becky Potmesil, *Alliance*
Paula Sue Steffen, *Humboldt*

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