



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - December 2023

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

In This Issue:

- [A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [FSA Announces Start of Signup for 2024 Ag Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Safety Net Programs](#)
- [USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Applications Online](#)
- [FSA December Loan Interest Rates](#)
- [Discrimination Financial Assistance Program Application Deadline Approaching](#)
- [Sign-up Ongoing at FSA Offices for Emergency Relief Program 2022](#)
- [USDA Reminds Specialty Crop Growers of Deadline to Apply for Assistance for 2023 On-Farm Food Safety Expenses](#)
- [NRCS Announces Extended Application Cutoff for Conservation Financial Assistance](#)
- [USDA's Insurance Option Offers First of Its Kind Risk Management Tool for Cow-Calf Producers](#)

A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We at Nebraska Farm Service Agency have appreciated the opportunity to work with you, our farmer and rancher customers, over the past year for the betterment of the agriculture industry in the state and are looking forward to working with you in the new year.

As we exit 2023, we are going out with a bang. Just in the past week, USDA announced the issuance of payments for the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP), the last of the pandemic-related assistance programs made available to producers through FSA. Our offices are working hard to finalize these. I ask that you keep two things in mind as you review your payment information: 1) other pandemic-related aid payments you may have received over the past couple of years are deducted as part of the PARP payment

formula; and 2) a 9.5% payment factor has been applied to payments due to the fact that applications nationwide outpaced overall available funding.

FSA announced this week the beginning of election and enrollment for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage commodity crop safety net programs. With the one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, these programs will be available for the 2024 season. See the article below for details. We will be planning some educational meetings in early 2024 on these programs, so stay tuned.

In addition to the above, we have a number of deadlines for other important programs around the corner, including deadlines for drought disaster relief programs in early 2024 for 2023 impacts. Please look at the list below for those that might impact you, and then contact your county office as soon as possible to schedule an appointment and complete any necessary paperwork if you haven't do so already.

Combine all of this work with the efforts of our farm loan staff to meet producer financing needs, and you have very busy county FSA staff across the state. They are working hard for you, so please join me in wishing them all the best for the new year.

Talk to you in January.

--Tim Divis

Dates to Remember

Dec. 25, 2023 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Dec. 31, 2023 – FSA deadline for distressed farm loan borrowers to request assistance under Inflation Reduction Act Section 22006 provisions

Jan. 1, 2024 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Jan. 2, 2024 – FSA acreage certification deadline for honey

Jan. 15, 2024 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Jan. 30, 2024 – FSA deadline for applications for Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) benefits for 2023 losses

Jan. 31, 2024 – FSA deadline for producers to apply for an LDP for wool and unshorn pelts

Jan. 31, 2024 - FSA application deadline for producers to apply for Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program benefits for 2023 expenses

Feb. 29, 2024 – FSA deadline for applications for Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) benefits for 2023 losses

****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.*

FSA Announces Start of Signup for 2024 Ag Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Safety Net Programs

USDA Farm Service Agency has announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the *Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

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 grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

[Read the full news release here.](#)

USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Applications Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency has launched an [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct Loan application each year can now use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features, including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customer service, and expand credit access.

The online farm loan application replicates the support an applicant would receive when completing a loan application in person with an FSA Farm Loan Officer, while continuing to provide customers with one-on-one assistance as needed. This tool and other process improvements allow farmers and ranchers to submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete and withdrawn applications.

Through a personalized dashboard, potential borrowers also can track the progress of their loan application. It can be accessed on farmers.gov or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool.

To use the online loan application tool, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#).

For the initial stage, the online application tool is only available for producers who will be, or are currently, operating their farm as an individual. FSA is expanding the tool's availability to married couples applying jointly and other legal entities in 2024.

For more information on this option and to learn how to get started by creating an online account, visit farmers.gov.

FSA December Loan Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 5.75%

Farm Ownership: 5.875%

Farm Ownership – Limited Resource: 5%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 3.875%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.875%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 4.75%

5-year term: 4.625%

7-year term: 4.625%

10-year term: 4.625%

12-year term: 4.75%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 6.375%

Discrimination Financial Assistance Program Application Deadline Approaching

USDA continues to accept applications for assistance through the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program for Nebraska farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. The application process will close on January 13, 2024. Borrowers have the option to apply for assistance online via 22007apply.gov or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at 22007apply.gov. The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Applicants can also call a free call center at 1-800-721-0970 or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available.

Several entities are involved in the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, with varying roles and responsibilities. The National Administrator and Regional Hubs are responsible for conducting outreach, assisting with the financial assistance application process, processing applications, managing program call centers, and operating local offices. Additional outreach and application support is provided by trusted community groups. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, you can go to <https://22007apply.gov>, and subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

Sign-up Ongoing at FSA Offices for Emergency Relief Program 2022

Farm Service Agency is accepting applications for the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#), a program designed to provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

ERP 2022 program benefits are being delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks. To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1

ERP 2022 Track 1 leverages existing federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments for eligible crop producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs. FSA is sending pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who have crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA. Receipt of a pre-filled application is

not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment, and those who received a pre-filled application must still apply for the assistance.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist eligible producers who suffered an eligible decrease in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year using revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. In cases where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, Track 2 provides an alternative method for establishing revenue. Likewise, Track 2 affords producers of crops that are used within an operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop a method for establishing revenue for the purpose of applying for ERP 2022 benefits. Producers are not required to submit tax records to FSA unless requested by the County Committee if required for an FSA compliance spot check.

Although not required when applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, applicants might find useful to the application process a schedule F (Form 1040) or *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Track 2 targets gaps in emergency relief assistance for eligible producers whose eligible losses were not covered by crop insurance or NAP including revenue losses too small (shallow loss) to be covered by crop insurance.

Producers interested in applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, should contact their local FSA county office. Additional reference resources can be found on FSA's [emergency relief website](#).

More Information

The ERP 2022 application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date.

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and through your local [FSA county office](#).

USDA Reminds Specialty Crop Growers of Deadline to Apply for Assistance for 2023 On-Farm Food Safety Expenses

Deadline for Calendar Year 2023 Applications Is Jan. 31, 2024

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds specialty crop growers that assistance is available for producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification through the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) program. Producers can apply for assistance on their calendar year 2023 expenses through Jan. 31, 2024.

Program Details

FSCSC assists specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses pertaining to obtaining or renewing a food safety

certification in calendar year 2023. FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing its certification, as well as a portion of related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at farmers.gov/food-safety.

Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2023 closes Jan. 31, 2024. FSA will issue payments after the application period closes. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Specialty crop producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to assist. Visit farmers.gov/food-safety for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

NRCS Announces Extended Application Cutoff for Conservation Financial Assistance



Producers Now Have Until March 1, 2024, to Sign Up

Nebraska farmers and ranchers who are interested in planning and competing for potential funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) authorization should ACT NOW. Applications are currently being received for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office for consideration under ACT NOW.

ACT NOW is a funding process where applications will have a shorter turnaround time compared to the traditional process and be processed in the order received. Based on the availability of funds, eligible applications with a score greater than a predetermined ranking threshold will be preapproved once assessed and ranked until funds have been depleted.

The ACT NOW process Nebraska will be using targets applications that implement Climate Smart Agricultural and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation activities such as cover crops, nutrient management, prescribed grazing for livestock, and irrigation efficiency improvements, to name a few. A complete list of eligible activities can be found [here](#) and at your local NRCS office.

The application cut off for Fiscal Year 2024 consideration is **Friday March 1, 2024**.

For more information about conservation programs and other assistance available, contact [your local NRCS field office](#) or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/NE.

USDA's Insurance Option Offers First of Its Kind Risk Management Tool for Cow-Calf Producers

USDA recently announced Weaned Calf Risk Protection, a new insurance option for livestock producers in several states, including Nebraska. This policy, offered by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), offers Actual Production History (APH) coverage for beef cow-calf producers to insure revenue from their spring calving operations. Weaned Calf Risk Protection will be available for the 2024 crop year.

APH policies insure producers against yield losses due to natural causes such as drought, excessive moisture, hail, wind, frost, insects, and disease. In the case of the new Weaned Calf Risk Protection, coverage is provided for a decline in price and loss of yield due to a decrease of overall weaning weight like revenue coverage offered for other crops.

The program will be available in Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Texas, beginning with the Jan. 31, 2024, sales closing date for the 2024 crop year. Coverage levels between 50 and 85% will be available along with catastrophic coverage.

This new insurance program adds to the suite of livestock insurance available to livestock producers such as Livestock Gross Margin (LGM), Livestock Risk Protection (LRP),

Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF), Annual Forage (AF), and Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP).

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents, whom interested producers should contact. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).



Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Information

Farm Service Agency

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

Tim Divis, FSA

Acting State Executive Director
timothy.divis@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*

Visit the Nebraska FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.
Visit the Nebraska NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne.

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).