



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - April 2024

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

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## A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director

Over the past couple weeks, (in between storms) it has been great to start seeing all of you back in the field again preparing the ground for planting season. While the weather

has been mostly windy, it is a great reminder FSA has programs available to you. We are a phone call away if you need assistance.

While much of the state is in the middle of planting season, that means it is time for acreage reporting. FSA is requesting your assistance with this process. To qualify for most programs such as safety net and some disaster programs, you must report your acres to maintain your eligibility for assistance in the event of a loss. The deadline for spring acreage certification is July 15. Some FSA county offices will provide you with maps to help you track the details needed to complete your certification, while others will ask you to keep track of what you plant, where you plant it and when you plant it so that information can be used during the certification process after you are done planting. Additional resources for the acreage certification process are found at [Farmers.gov - Crop Acreage Reports](https://www.farmers.gov/crop-acreage-reports). This includes an option to print your maps if you have access through the [secure farmers.gov portal](https://www.securefarmers.gov/portal). Please communicate and work with your county FSA office to ensure your acreage reporting is completed in a timely process. Thank you for your assistance with this important annual task.

While we've been fortunate enough to get a little precipitation in some areas around the state, it is always important to be mindful about the resources available to you in the event of a wildfire or drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has both technical and financial assistance available to help Nebraska farmers and livestock producers. Our FSA offices have several programs that can aid producers in receiving some financial assistance due to loss of grazing, loss of feedstuffs, livestock deaths above normal mortality, loss of fencing, and other specific impacts due to wildfire and/or drought.

It's important to keep in mind that our sister agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, also may be able to provide financial assistance to producers. For example, they may be able to provide support for deferred grazing and to establish cropland cover by planting cover crops. In short, if you have impacts due to extreme weather, remember to visit your FSA/USDA office sooner rather than later to report your losses and receive guidance about the assistance available to you.

That's all for now. Until next time, happy planting.

--Tim Divis

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## Dates to Remember

**April 29, 2024** – FSA deadline for applications for the Dairy Margin Coverage Program

**May 27, 2024** – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

**May 31, 2024** – 2023 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, sunflower seed

*\*\*\*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.*

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## Maps for Acreage Reporting Are Available

Maps are now available at your county FSA Office for acreage reporting purposes. If you wish to receive your maps by e-mail, please call or email your county FSA office. You also may access your maps online if you have a secure account through [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov). Learn more at [Farmers.gov - Crop Acreage Reports](https://farmers.gov).

In order to maintain program eligibility for benefits, you must file timely acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may cause ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline. The deadline for spring-planted crop acreage reporting is July 15.

Producers are encouraged to file their acreage reports as soon as planting is completed. Please contact your county FSA today for an appointment.

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## Foreign Investors Must Report U.S. Agricultural Land Holdings

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds foreign investors with an interest in agricultural land in the United States that they are required to report their land holdings and transactions to USDA.

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires foreign investors who buy, sell or hold an interest in U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings and transactions to the USDA. Foreign investors must file AFIDA Report Form FSA-153 with the FSA county office in the county where the land is located. Large or complex filings may be handled by AFIDA headquarters staff in Washington, D.C.

According to CFR Title 7 Part 781, any foreign person who holds an interest in U.S. agricultural land is required to report their holdings no later than 90 days after the date of the transaction.

Foreign investors should report holdings of agricultural land totaling 10 acres or more used for farming, ranching or timber production, and leaseholds on agricultural land of 10 or more years. Tracts totaling 10 acres or less in the aggregate, and which produce annual gross receipts in excess of \$1,000 from the sale of farm, ranch, forestry or timber products, must also be reported. AFIDA reports also are required when there are changes in land use, such as from agricultural to nonagricultural use. Foreign investors also must file a report when there is a change in the status of ownership.

The information from AFIDA reports is used to prepare an annual report to Congress. These annual reports to Congress, as well as more information, are available on the FSA [AFIDA webpage](https://farmers.gov).

Assistance in completing the FSA-153 report may be obtained from the local FSA office. For more information regarding AFIDA or FSA programs, contact your county FSA office. Find your local office by visiting [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov).

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## Reporting Organic Crops

If you want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and you select the "organic" option on your NAP application, you must report your crops as organic. Producers without organic NAP coverage may also elect to report their organic acreage to FSA.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage. You also must provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional and buffer zone acreage.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your county FSA office.

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## Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

ELAP provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible losses include:

- **Livestock** - grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to

an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water and feed because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

- **Honeybee** - loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.
- **Farm-Raised Fish** - death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

If you've suffered eligible livestock, honeybee, or farm-raised fish losses during calendar year 2024, you must file a notice of loss and an application for payment by Jan. 30, 2025.

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## Keeping Livestock Inventory Records Critical for Program Application

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. For the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your county USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov)

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## Dairy Producers in Nebraska Reminded to Enroll in 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage by April 29

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging dairy producers to enroll by April 29, 2024, for 2024 [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC), an important safety net program that helps offset milk and feed price differences. This year's DMC signup began Feb. 28,

2024, and payments, retroactive to January, began in March 2024. So far, DMC payments triggered in January and February of 2024 at margins of \$8.48 and \$9.44 respectively.

### **2024 DMC Coverage and Premium Fees**

To read additional details regarding 2024 DMC coverage go to the new release at this [link](#).

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, minus a \$100 administrative fee. The administrative fee is waived for dairy producers who are considered limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or a military veteran. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

### **More Information**

DMC is a voluntary risk management program providing protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. In 2023, DMC payments triggered in 11 months including two months, June and July, where the margin fell below the catastrophic level of \$4.00 per hundredweight, a first for DMC or its predecessor Margin Protection Program. Find more program information at the [DMC webpage](#).

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## **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. Producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs were mailed to Track 1 application forms last year.

### **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](#)

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## Producers May be Eligible for Emergency Conservation Program Assistance to Address Wildfire Impacts

If your farming or ranching operation has suffered severe damage due to a recent wildfire, you may be eligible for assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) administered by your County Farm Service Agency (FSA).

For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:

- be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be needed to return the land to productive agricultural use
- is unusual and is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area
- affect the productive capacity of the farmland
- impair or endanger the land.

To be eligible for assistance, practices must not be started until all the following are met:

- an application for cost-share assistance has been filed
- the local FSA County Committee (COC) or its representative has conducted an onsite inspection of the damaged area

- the Agency responsible for technical assistance, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has made a determination of what is required for rehabilitation.

If you qualify for ECP assistance, you may receive cost-share levels not to exceed 75 percent of the total allowable costs of restoration measures. Eligible socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 90 percent of the total allowable costs of restoration. No one is eligible for more than \$500,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence.

For more information about ECP, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## **FSA Loan Servicing, Other Organization Resources Available During Financial Stress**

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

Farmers and ranchers also can access assistance through other entities in Nebraska that offer services during financially challenging times. The Rural Response Hotline provides referral and support services for farmers, ranchers and rural residents and their families. The number to call is (800) 464-0258 or visit the website at <https://farmhotline.com>. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture manages the Negotiations Program, which offers mediation services for agricultural borrowers, creditors and USDA program participants. Through this program, participants also can access free one-on-one education on agricultural financial and legal matters. For information, call (402) 471-4876 or visit the website at <https://negotiations.nebraska.gov/>.

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## **Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans**

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 \$2,236,000. 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 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## **FSA Loan Interest Rates for April**

### **OPERATING/OWNERSHIP**

Farm Operating: 5.125%  
Farm Ownership: 5.375%  
Farm Ownership – Limited Resource: 5%  
Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 3.375%  
Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%  
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

### **FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN**

3-year term: 4.375%  
5-year term: 4.25%  
7-year term: 4.25%  
10-year term: 4.25%  
12-year term: 4.25%

### **MARKETING ASSISTANCE**

Commodity Loan: 6%

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## **USDA Partners with FarmRaise to Offer Educational Tools and Resources to Promote Financial Access Equity for Agricultural Producers**

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) has unveiled a new, online Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Decision Tool and farm loan resources available to agricultural producers and cooperators who help producers access USDA disaster assistance, farm loans and other federal farm programs. The new LIP tool and the farm loan informational video resources were developed in partnership with FarmRaise and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). These tools are now available at [www.farmraise.com/usda-fsa](http://www.farmraise.com/usda-fsa).

### **Current FarmRaise Tools and Resources**

[FarmRaise, Inc.](http://www.farmraise.com) has created an online, [educational hub](#) -- called [Farm Service Agency 101](#) -- comprised of videos, and resources that enable cooperators and the agricultural producers they serve to learn about and access major FSA programs.

To learn more about the LIP Decisions Tool and farm loan assistance tools read the news release at this [link](#).

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# USDA Launches New Bobwhite Conservation Pilot in Nebraska, Enhancing Opportunities for Producers and Wildlife



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the launch of a new Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) conservation effort – the Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project, which offers agricultural producers and landowners the tools to conserve wildlife habitat for northern bobwhite quail by improving East-Central grasslands while achieving other critical conservation benefits, including sequestering carbon and improving water quality and soil health.

The Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project, offered by the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) through Working Lands for Wildlife, provided dedicated funding of \$13 million -- for fiscal year 2024 -- in new assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. This is for producers to help the bobwhite and other game and non-game species by managing their working lands for early successional habitat while meeting their lands natural resource and production goals.

This new pilot includes funding to support producers in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, **Nebraska**, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

NRCS accepts applications year-round for EQIP. Interested producers in Nebraska should contact or visit their [local USDA Service Center](#) to enroll.

The Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project supports the 5-year, 7-million-acre goal of the Working Lands for Wildlife Northern Bobwhite, Grasslands and Savannas Framework for Conservation Action unveiled in 2022 by USDA. Recently, NRCS expanded the [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#) that qualify for funding through the Inflation Reduction Act. Those funds will also be critical to Working Lands for Wildlife's success in reaching its long-term goals.

The Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project advances USDA's efforts in climate-smart agriculture with almost 20 climate-smart practices being deployed voluntarily on private lands, including field borders, brush management, tillage management, prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, forest stand improvement and herbaceous weed treatment. More than 17 conservation practices that support climate smart mitigation are included in the Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project.

## New 'Bobscares' App

NRCS and Quail Forever are also supporting northern bobwhite conservation with a new "Bobscares" mobile app for citizen science reporting that will help researchers better understand population dynamics and help managers direct resources for habitat work where

those investments will be most effective in recovering the species. Additionally, for those interested, the app will connect landowners to technical experts who can make habitat recommendations and share information on voluntary cost share programs. Bobscapes reporting adheres to protection of personally identifiable information for citizens and for bobwhite locations. Lastly, the data provided will assist wildlife biologists in creating a national habitat network of “Bobwhite landscapes” necessary to ensure this species persists for future generations.

### More Information

Producers and landowners interested in the Northern Bobwhite Pilot Project should contact NRCS at their local [USDA Service Center](#) to sign up now.



## Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Information

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Aaron LaPointe, *Winnebago*  
Becky Potmesil, *Alliance*  
Paula Sue Steffen, *Humboldt*

Visit the Nebraska FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/ne](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ne).  
Visit the Nebraska NRCS website at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne).

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