

May USDA eNewsletter - May 18, 2022

Farm Service Agency | Natural Resources Conservation Service | Risk Management Agency

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NRCS Nevada offers assistance for farmers transitioning to organic production

Applications are due June 15

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is announcing a sign-up for the <u>Organic Transition Initiative</u> (<u>OTI)</u> through the <u>Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)</u>. Applications are due by June 15 for producers who are beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification.

The funding is part of the \$70 million in American Rescue Plan funding for technical and financial assistance as part of the OTI.

The OTI-specific practices included under EQIP in this sign-up are:

- Organic Management (Practice Code 823)
- Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (Practice Code 138)

- Transition to Organic Design (Practice Code 140)
- Conservation Cover (Practice Code 327)
- Conservation Crop Rotation (Practice Code 327)
- Cover Crops (Practice Code 340)
- Field Borders (Practice Code 386)
- Nutrient Management (Practice Code 590)

The new organic management standard also gives producers the flexibility to get the assistance and education they need, such as attending workshops or requesting help from organic production experts or mentors. It supports conservation activities and practices required for organic certification and may provide foregone income reimbursement for dips in production during the transition period.

Flexible education and training activities can include field days, working alongside organic experts and more. You can work with NRCS field staff, approved technical service providers, and other approved organic partners.

Higher payment rates and other options are available for <u>historically underserved producers</u> including socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran, and limited resource farmers and ranchers. For more information or to sign up contact your local USDA Service Center. Locations can be found at https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app.

To learn more about organic farming visit farmers.gov/your-business/organic.

USDA Announces Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023

Grassland CRP Signup Opened April 17

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup starting **April 17 through May 26, 2023.** Among CRP enrollment opportunities, Grassland CRP is unique as a *working lands program*, allowing producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity and conservation.

Protecting grasslands with CRP not only benefits participants with annual rental payments and cost share assistance; it also contributes positively to the economy of many regions, builds biodiversity, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

More than 2.4 million acres were enrolled through the 2022 Grassland CRP Signup from agricultural producers and private landowners. That signup – the highest ever for the program– reflects the continued success and value of investments in voluntary, producer-led, working lands conservation programs. The current total participation in Grassland CRP is 6.3 million acres, which is part of the 23 million acres enrolled in CRP opportunities overall.

Since 2021, the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers all CRP programs, has made several improvements to Grassland CRP to broaden the program's reach, including:

- Creating two <u>National Priority Zones</u> to put focus on environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion.
- Enhanced offers with 10 additional ranking points to producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans.
- Leverage the <u>Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program</u> (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities Tribal Nations in the Great Plains

Other CRP Signups

General CRP

General CRP signup closed on April 7. The program helps producers and landowners 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. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

Continuous CRP

Under <u>Continuous CRP</u>, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Also available is the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states but has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

How to Sign Up

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP, or any other CRP enrollment option, should contact their local <u>USDA Service Center</u> to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

More Information

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

USDA Offers Disaster Assistance for Producers Facing Inclement Weather

Severe weather events create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. USDA offers several programs to help with recovery.

Risk Management

For producers who have risk protection through <u>Federal Crop Insurance</u> or the <u>Noninsured Crop Disaster</u> <u>Assistance Program</u> (NAP), we want to remind you to report crop damage to your crop insurance agent or the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

If you have crop insurance, contact your agency within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days. If you have NAP coverage, file a Notice of Loss (also called Form CCC-576) within 15 days of loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Disaster Assistance

USDA also offers disaster assistance programs, which is especially important to livestock, fruit and vegetable, specialty and perennial crop producers who have fewer risk management options.

First, the <u>Livestock Indemnity Program</u> (LIP) and <u>Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program</u> (ELAP) reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died as a result of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed and forage. And, the <u>Livestock Forage Disaster Program</u> (LFP) provides assistance to producers of grazed forage crop acres that have suffered crop loss due to a qualifying drought. Livestock producers suffering the impacts of drought can also request <u>Emergency Haying and Grazing</u> on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

Next, the <u>Tree Assistance Program</u> (TAP) provides cost share assistance to rehabilitate and replant tree, vines or shrubs loss experienced by orchards and nurseries. This complements NAP or crop insurance coverage, which cover the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

For LIP and ELAP, you will need to file a Notice of Loss for livestock and grazing or feed losses within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days. For TAP, you will need to file a program application within 90 days.

Documentation

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to after the loss.

Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- · Production records
- Vaccination records
- · Bank or other loan documents
- Third-party certification

Other Programs

The <u>Emergency Conservation Program</u> and <u>Emergency Forest Restoration Program</u> can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore damaged farmland or forests.

Additionally, FSA offers a variety of loans available including emergency loans that are triggered by disaster declarations and operating loans that can assist producers with credit needs. You can use these loans to

replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs.

Meanwhile, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial resources through its <u>Environmental Quality Incentives Program</u> to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. Assistance may also be available for emergency animal mortality disposal from natural disasters and other causes.

Additional Resources

Additional details – including payment calculations – can be found on our <u>NAP</u>, <u>ELAP</u>, <u>LIP</u>, and <u>TAP</u> fact sheets. On farmers.gov, the <u>Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool</u>, <u>Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet</u>, and <u>Farm Loan Discovery Tool</u> can help you determine program or loan options.

While we never want to have to implement disaster programs, we are here to help. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local USDA Service Center.

USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking nominations for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations will be open to public from **May 15**, **2023**, **to July 15**, **2023**. The 12-member Committee, which first convened in March 2022, is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

"The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Committee is an important opportunity for urban and innovative producers to have their voices heard and give direct feedback to USDA," said Terry Cosby, Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which oversees USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. "These new members will provide valuable input on how we can better serve urban agricultural producers with a focus on equity, local food systems, access to safe and nutritious food and new ways to address climate change."

Members of the Committee include agricultural producers and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing. The Committee last met in April 2023.

Nominations

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise. Four positions are open for nominations including:

- One individual representing urban agriculture.
- · One individual representing an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One individual representing business and economic development, which may include a business
 development entity, community development initiatives, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a
 planning organization.

 One individual representing related experience in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership must submit a nomination package including the following:

- A completed background disclosure form (Form AD-755) signed by the nominee; https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-755.pdf.
- A brief summary explaining the nominee's interest in one or more open vacancies including any unique qualifications that address the membership composition and criteria described above.
- A resume providing the nominee's background, experience, and educational qualifications.
- Recent publications by the nominee relative to extending support for urban agriculture or innovative production (optional).
- Letter(s) of endorsement (optional).

Nomination packages must be submitted by email

to <u>UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov</u> or postmarked by July 15, 2023. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4627-S, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations. For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at <u>UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov</u>.

Additional details are available in the Federal Register notice.

Myth-Busting FSA's New Revenue-Based Disaster and Pandemic Assistance Programs

A Message from FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux

In January, we announced two new programs designed to assist producers who experienced revenue losses from 2020 and 2021 natural disasters or the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs are revenue-based and feel a little different from our regular programs, but the goal is to better support farmers.

Both the <u>Emergency Relief Program (ERP)</u> Phase Two and the <u>Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP)</u> offer a holistic approach to disaster assistance and provide economic support for producers who bear the financial brunt of circumstances beyond their control.

With the rollout of any new program, there is a learning curve for producers and employees alike. ERP Phase Two and PARP are no exception. To encourage producer participation in these valuable programs, I'm going to do my best to debunk some myths and misconceptions surrounding ERP Phase Two and PARP.

With a June 2, 2023, deadline to apply for both programs, it's important that we clear up confusion about how to apply, what documents are required for participation, insurance requirements and related misinformation making its way across the countryside.

Now, let's do some myth-busting.

Myth #1 – You need to submit a completed tax return to FSA to apply for ERP Phase Two or PARP.

While these programs are based on revenue losses, you do not need a tax return, completed or otherwise, to apply for assistance. In fact, we have an <u>ERP Phase 2 tool</u> and <u>PARP tool</u> that walk you through the process step by step.

We understand that you may have questions for your certified public accountant or tax preparer, who was likely been hard to reach prior to the April 18 Internal Revenue Service tax deadline but we encourage you to download the program decision tools and get started. You'll probably discover that you already have on hand much of the information you need.

The following supporting materials will help you:

- Schedule F (Form 1040); and
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 for ERP and for calendar years 2018, 2019, and 2020 for PARP.

The only reason you *might* have to provide your tax returns to FSA is in the event of a spot check or a request from the FSA County Committee.

Producers can <u>register for a free webinar</u> hosted by USDA and members of the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee on Monday, May 1 at 2 p.m. eastern for a discussion on completing the ERP Phase Two application form.

Myth #2 – You cannot receive an ERP Phase Two payment if you received a payment under Phase One.

It's possible that you can still receive ERP Phase Two benefits if you received an ERP Phase One payment. There is also a possibility that your Phase Two payment may be offset.

Myth #3 – ERP Phase Two was intended to be an additional payment to those who received payment under Phase One.

ERP Phase Two was never designed or intended to be an additional payment. Instead, it was intended to assist those producers who did not receive relief in Phase One.

Click here to read the full blog and view a producer testimonial on the application process.

USDA Seeks Feedback from Producers About 2023 Crops, Stocks, Inventories, and Values

During the next several weeks, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct two major mid-year surveys, the June Agricultural Survey, and the June Area Survey. The agency will contact more than 250 producers across Nevada to determine crop acreage and stock levels as of June 1, 2023.

Producers can respond to the June Agricultural Survey online at www.agcounts.usda.gov, by phone, or mail. They will be asked to provide information on planted and harvested acreage, including acreage for biotech crops and grain stocks. For the June Area Survey, agency representatives will interview farm and ranch operators in randomly selected segments over the phone. Producers will be asked to provide information on crop acreage, grain stocks, livestock inventory, land values, and value of sales.

Make your voice heard! Last call to respond to the 2022 Census of Agriculture

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has extended data collection for the <u>2022 Census of Agriculture</u> through the spring to ensure all farmers and ranchers take advantage of the opportunity to be represented in the widely used data. It's not too late to respond online at <u>agrounts.usda.gov</u> or by mail.

Census data inform decisions about disaster assistance, farm and conservation programs, infrastructure and rural development, research, education, and more. This is your opportunity to be heard through the ag census and help shape the future of American ag. Whether you farm thousands of acres or a rooftop, the most important thing is that you are counted. Respond today and learn more at nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Equity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating its farm loan programs to better support current borrowers, including historically underserved producers. These improvements are part of USDA's commitment to increase equity in all programs, including farm loans that provide important access to capital for covering operating expenses and purchasing land and equipment.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized FSA to provide equitable relief to certain direct loan borrowers, who are non-compliant with program requirements due to good faith reliance on a material action of, advice of, or non-action from an FSA official. Previously, borrowers may have been required to immediately repay the loan or convert it to a non-program loan with higher interest rates, less favorable terms, and limited loan servicing.

Now, FSA has additional flexibilities to assist borrowers in such situations. If the agency provided incorrect guidance to an existing direct loan borrower, the agency may provide equitable relief to that borrower. FSA may assist the borrower by allowing the borrower to keep their loans at current rates or other terms received in association with the loan which was determined to be noncompliant or the borrower may receive other equitable relief for the loan as the Agency determines to be appropriate.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local loan officials to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available that can assist them in starting, expanding or maintaining their operation.

Additional Updates

Equitable relief is one of several changes authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill that USDA has made to the direct and guaranteed loan programs. Other changes that were previously implemented include:

- Modifying the existing three-year farming experience requirement for Direct Farm Ownership loans to include additional items as acceptable experience.
- Allowing socially disadvantaged and beginning farmer applicants to receive a guarantee equal to 95%, rather than the otherwise applicable 90% guarantee.
- Expanding the definition of and providing additional benefits to veteran farmers.
- Allowing borrowers who received restructuring with a write down to maintain eligibility for an Emergency loan.

• Expanding the scope of eligible issues and persons covered under the agricultural Certified Mediation Program.

Additional information on these changes is available in the March 8, 2022 rule on the Federal Register.

More Background

FSA has taken other recent steps to increase equity in its programs. Last summer, USDA announced it was providing \$67 million in competitive loans through its new Heirs' Property Relending Program to help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues. FSA also invested \$4.7 million to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers, which contributed to a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers in the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2), a key pandemic assistance program, since April 2021.

Additionally, in January 2021, Secretary Vilsack announced a <u>temporary suspension of past-due debt</u> <u>collection and foreclosures</u> for distressed direct loan borrowers due to the economic hardship imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Producers can explore available loan options using the <u>Farm Loan Discovery Tool on farmers.gov</u> (<u>also available in Spanish</u>) or by contacting their local <u>USDA Service Center</u>. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Due to the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Producers can <u>contact their local Service Center</u> to set up an in-person or phone appointment to discuss loan options.

Ask the Expert: A Farm Operating Loan Q & A With Jack Carlile

In this Ask the Expert, Jack Carlile, Farm Loan Manager for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), answers questions about farm operating loans and when producers should apply in order to secure funds for the current crop year.

As the Farm Loan Manager for the Cherokee County Service Center, Jack is responsible for managing the loan making and loan servicing activities for five counties in northeast Oklahoma. His office provides services for over 650 farm loan customers. Jack was raised on a cross bred cow/calf operation that his grandparents started. Over the years, each generation has added to the operation by purchasing additional pasture. The operation also grows and bales their own hay. Jack's agriculture background and degree in agriculture economics from Oklahoma State University help him better understand the financing needs of his producers.

Who can apply for FSA Farm Loans?

Anyone can apply for FSA's loan programs. Applications will be considered on basic eligibility requirements. To apply for a loan, you must meet the following general eligibility requirements including:

- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
- Operator of a family farm or ranch.
- · Have a satisfactory credit history.
- Unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs.

Not be delinquent on any federal debts.

To read the full blog visit farmers.gov/blog/ask-the-expert-farm-operating-loan-ga-with-jack-carlile.

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 <u>Your FSA Farm Loan Compass</u>.

USDA Offers Livestock Disaster Program Flexibilities; Responds to Needs Expressed by Producers Hard-Hit by Natural Disasters

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has provided additional flexibilities and further enhanced disaster recovery assistance provided by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP), Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Livestock Program (LFP) in response to needs expressed by livestock producers across the U.S. who have experienced significant feed, forage and animal losses from natural disasters. These livestock disaster program policy enhancements include an extended June 2, 2023, deadline to submit notices of loss and applications for payment for 2022 losses. The deadline extension and program flexibilities are available to eligible producers nationwide who incurred losses from a qualifying natural disaster event.

LIP and ELAP reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died because of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed, and forage. LFP provides benefits for grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or wildfire. For fire, losses must occur on federally managed lands. ELAP provides benefits for grazing losses not covered under LFP.

FSA is accepting 2022 LIP notices of loss and applications for payment through June 2, 2023, for all covered livestock that may have been eligible in 2022.

Producers who did not sign up for ELAP assistance for hauling livestock, forage and feedstuff hauling or other losses covered under ELAP in 2022 can also apply through June 2, 2023.

FSA will accept LFP applications for only newly eligible covered livestock through June 2, 2023.

All required supporting documentation must be received and on file in the county office by the established deadline.

Revising 2022 Applications

Producers who have a 2022 ELAP, LIP or LFP application on file with FSA as of the program deadline or were placed on an approved register, may revise their application with the newly updated eligible livestock no later than June 2, 2023.

Filing a Notice of Loss for ELAP due to 2022 and 2023 Drought

To support program access for counties that do not currently have a 365-day grazing season, FSA is waiving the 30-day timeframe for producers to submit a notice of loss for the 2023 ELAP program year due to qualifying drought in calendar years 2022 or 2023. Producers can now submit a notice of loss from the date the loss is apparent, as far back as Jan. 1, 2023, for 2022 eligible losses and 2023 eligible losses that occur before June 2, 2023.

For counties that have a 365-day grazing season, producers must have a qualifying drought in the 2023 calendar year to be eligible for 2023 livestock, water and feed hauling in 2023.

More Information

Livestock producers must provide evidence that livestock death was due to an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition. In addition, livestock producers should bring supporting evidence, including documentation of the number and kind of livestock that died, photographs or video records to document the loss, purchase records, veterinarian records, production records and other similar documents. Owners who sold injured livestock for a reduced price because the livestock were injured due to an adverse weather event, must provide verifiable evidence of the reduced sale of the livestock.

Producers can apply for ELAP, LFP and LIP benefits at their local FSA county office. For more information or to submit a notice of loss or an application for payment, please contact your <u>local FSA office</u> or visit <u>farmers.gov/recover.</u>



Share Your #Plant2023 Season

Let's showcase your story online.

It's that time of year again, and we want to showcase your planting season on social media and blogs. To participate, just send us a photo and a bit of information. Learn more: https://www.farmers.gov/blog/share-your-plant-2023-stories

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