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Message from the FSA State Director

Greetings from the South Dakota State FSA Office!

Finally, spring is here! After what was a normal winter, which we desperately needed after the winter of 22 – 23, we are starting to see the first signs of pastures greening up and planters anxiously waiting to hit the fields.

For FSA offices, April is a chance to catch our breath after completing ARC/PLC sign up by March 15th with our area farmers and ranchers. I am happy to say, due to the hard work of our county office staff members, over 58,000 ARC/PLC contracts were completed. As you know, it can take a while to get everything completed, so thank you for working with your FSA office to get signed-up!

As a reminder, the next deadline approaching for most of our farmers and ranchers is acreage reporting. The deadline to report your acres is July 15th. However, you don't have to wait until the last minute, you can report the same day you finish planting! I encourage folks to visit their local office before the summer gets busy with haying or turning out pairs.

I want to thank South Dakota Soybeans for including South Dakota FSA staff to visit with farmers about the [Farm Storage Facility Loan](#) program during their recent *Shop Talk* events in Madison and Yankton. The FSFL loan program is much more than a grain bin loan program; it can loan funds for a variety of structures and equipment. If you are planning to put up a structure or need equipment on hand for harvest this fall, it is not too early to start the process. For more information contact your local county office.

Please be safe as we head in to planting season!

Sincerely,

Steve Dick
State Executive Director
USDA-Farm Service Agency

Message from the NRCS State Conservationist

Greetings,

We have started obligating funds to support Conservation Plans and program applications finalized earlier this year. Readers are aware that the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is providing a significant increase in funding for conservation activities. Transparent use of IRA and other funds is a key priority of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and I invite you to track our progress of IRA fund obligations by visiting the [IRA Data Visualization Tool](#). Filter the 'State' drop down menu to track our real-time obligation progress in South Dakota.

Other online tools of the [RCA Data Viewer](#) webpage allow users to view financial assistance and conservation activity trends in the state. For example, the [NRCS Conservation Programs: Practices Applied](#) tool will show that NRCS financially assisted with activities to reduce tillage on 315,299 acres in Fiscal Year 2023. The tool offers different ways to sort and display data. To display this acreage, I first choose the 'selected practices' tab and then selected residue and tillage management activity codes 329, 345, E329, and E345 of the *Practices* filter. Contact our NRCS State Office at 605-352-1200 for assistance with practice codes or other specifics.

We have two upcoming opportunities to financially partner with entities who can support the capabilities and mission of NRCS while also meeting the needs of your organization or members. I encourage municipalities, schools, tribal governments, and other entities to consider ways we may share resources for a common goal. Proposals for both opportunities that plan to engage new NRCS customers, beginning farmers, and populations that historically were underserved by USDA programs are encouraged. Some entities may be better positioned to assist new NRCS customers and historically underserved groups than NRCS alone.

First, more than \$4 million is available this year for our Conservation Collaboration Cooperative Agreements (CCCA) in South Dakota with a proposal deadline of April 29. Review the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) posted to [Grants.gov](#) for details of eligibility and objectives. Email Colette Kessler, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships, at colette.kessler@usda.gov with additional questions.

Second, \$1.5 billion is available nationwide through the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) with proposals due July 2. Additionally, the NRCS is offering formal RCPP [proposal application assistance](#) to Tribes, Tribal colleges, and other community-based organizations representing underserved communities on a first come, first served basis. Funded proposals from 2023, with South Dakota as the lead state, totaled

\$61,114,709! Review the links and the April 3rd [press release](#) for details and upcoming [webinar links](#). Email Matt Morlock, RCPP Coordinator in South Dakota at Matthew.Morlock@usda.gov with additional questions.

Thank you to all South Dakota farmers, ranchers, land managers, landowners and conservation partners who are moving the needle of conservation in our state.

Sincerely,

Tony Sunseri
State Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Important Dates & Deadlines

April 29, 2024 - Deadline to enroll in 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program

April 29, 2024 - Deadline for entities to apply for NRCS Conservation Collaboration Cooperative Agreement via www.grants.gov

July 2, 2024 - Deadline for entities to apply for NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program via [application website](#)

July 15, 2024 - 2023 ARC-IC Production Certification Deadline

July 15, 2024 - Acreage Reporting Deadline for 2024 Crop Year spring-seeded crops, perennial forage & Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage

Know your Final Planting Dates

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

USDA to Provide More Than \$3 Billion to Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters

The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in 2022.

Background

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328) that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by eligible natural disasters that occurred in calendar year 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 will be delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. FSA intends to make both tracks available to producers at the same time. This two-track approach enables USDA to:

- Streamline the application process.
- Reduce the paperwork burden on producers.
- Proactively include provisions for underserved producers who have not been well served by past emergency relief efforts.
- Encourage producer participation in existing risk management programs to mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events.

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.

Although 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, producers indemnified for losses resulting from 2022 natural disasters do not have to wait to receive the application before requesting ERP 2022 assistance. Effective Oct. 31, 2023, producers can apply for ERP 2022 benefits whether they have received the pre-filled application or not. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

USDA estimates that ERP Track 1 benefits will reach more than 206,000 producers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,500 producers who obtained NAP coverage for the 2022 crop 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 the following documents useful to the process:

- Schedule F (Form 1040)

- *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](#).

Additional Required Forms

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. FSA started accepting applications on Oct. 31, 2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Required forms:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs* (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2022 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm the status of their forms can contact their local FSA county office.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops.

More Information

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](#).

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, 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.

Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2023 livestock losses, you must file a notice and provide the following supporting documentation 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.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation
- Livestock beginning inventory documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application for payment by March 3, 2025.

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Update Your Records

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 local County USDA Service Center.

Report Banking Changes to FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to receive timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for any reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

For some programs, payments are not made until the following year. For example, payments for crop year 2019 through the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage program aren't paid until 2020. If the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

Ask the Expert: Customer Farm Records Mapping Q&A with Gwen Uecker

In this Ask the Expert, Gwen Uecker answers a few questions about USDA's farmers.gov customer portal. Gwen serves as the Team Lead for the Program Delivery Division (PDD), Common Processes Branch for the Deputy Administrator of Farm Program within Farm Service Agency (FSA). She helps lead PDD's effort to provide personalized customer information via farmers.gov.

A farmers.gov account provides self-service opportunities to FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) customers via a secure authenticated access process.

What is the value of Customer Farm Records Mapping and why should producers use farmers.gov?

Customer Farm Records Mapping (cFRM) provides you with self-help options and access to FSA data from home 24/7. For example, you do not have to wait for FSA to mail out maps for acreage reporting or make a special trip to the office to pick up your maps. You can print farm tract maps directly from farmers.gov.

New features include the ability to import precision agriculture planting boundaries and create labels containing crop information that can be printed on-farm tract maps. The maps can then be provided to FSA at the local USDA Service Center for completing the annual crop acreage report. You can use the draw tools to determine acres in a drawn area. The drawn area can be printed on a map and provided to the Service Center, a third party such as a chemical applicator, or exported as a feature file for use in other geospatial applications.

In addition, you can "Switch Profile" to view cFRM data for individuals or entities you are authorized to act on behalf of. This means you can view and print maps for your entity's farms. Producers can also view and print farm records details, including base and yield information (FSA-156EZ).

The FSA Farm Records Mapping page is accessed by clicking the blue “View Farm Records” button from the farmers.gov LAND tab.

To read the full blog visit [Ask the Expert: Customer Farm Records Mapping Q&A with Gwen Uecker | Farmers.gov](#).

Communication Is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be successful. FSA staff will provide guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower’s graduation to commercial credit. While it is FSA’s commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower’s responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

If a farm loan borrower can’t make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend April Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on April 10 from 2-4 p.m. Eastern.

Meeting details can be viewed in the [Federal Register Notice](#). Written comments can be submitted via UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov by April 24 at 11:59 p.m. The Committee will deliberate and vote on proposed recommendations and address public comments during the meeting. USDA will share the agenda between 24 to 48 hours prior to the meeting on the [Committee's webpage](#).

The Committee is managed by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and was established through the 2018 Farm Bill and is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture.

[Learn more or register.](#)

NRCS Delivers Resources to Inform Science-Based, Data-Driven Conservation

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture's primary private lands conservation agency, NRCS delivers the data, technology, and standards that enable landowners and our many conservation partners to make decisions informed by objective, reliable science.

The [Conservation Effects Assessment Project \(CEAP\)](#) is an effort led by NRCS to evaluate and inform voluntary conservation across the nation's working lands. From a [decadal report on the outcomes of voluntary conservation in the sagebrush biome](#) to new data-driven tools for individual landowners, CEAP helps provide the science backing we need to:

- Identify how and where to invest conservation resources most strategically.
- Evaluate the outcomes of on-the-ground conservation actions.
- Leverage lessons learned from these findings to strengthen future conservation delivery.

Recent CEAP deliverables that support voluntary wildlife conservation include:

- [Conservation Outcomes Webinars](#) on [targeting conservation in sagebrush country](#), [rare turtle conservation in the Northeast](#), [reducing woody encroachment to conserve rangeland production](#), and [managing working lands for lesser prairie-chickens](#).
- [New research](#) quantifying the important role wetland easements play in wintering waterfowl conservation.
- The [Rangeland Brush Estimation Tool](#), which ranchers and other land managers may use to quickly estimate woody plant canopy cover and assess woody encroachment on western rangelands.

Our next webinar, scheduled for 2:00 p.m. eastern on April 25, will share new findings on the effects of cover crops on grassland birds. Additional details are available on the [Conservation Outcomes Webinar Series webpage](#).

Visit the [CEAP Wildlife Assessments webpage](#) to access more than 130 publications and other reports, webinar recordings, and interactive, data-based tools to support voluntary wildlife conservation.

USDA Improves Crop Insurance to Better Support Conservation, Climate-Smart Practices

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating the Federal crop insurance program to affirm the use of USDA conservation practices as Good Farming Practices for crop insurance. Recently, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently updated the [Good Farming Practices Handbook](#), as part of the agency's broader efforts to support conservation and climate-smart activities as well as to improve crop insurance for agricultural producers.

The updated handbook recognizes all [conservation practices](#) offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Good Farming Practices for crop insurance. Essentially, appropriate use of NRCS conservation practices will have no impact on crop insurance coverage, which affirms how the rules have worked on the ground for years.

Additionally, in the handbook, NRCS is recognized as an agricultural expert resource for cover crop management systems.

This updated handbook builds on similar efforts, including RMA's [designation of planting cover crops](#) as a Good Farming Practice in 2019.

Conservation and Crop Insurance

In recent years, RMA has increased its support of conservation by encouraging producers to use conservation and climate-smart practices. In November, RMA announced improvements to its [Hybrid Seed Rice coverage](#) to support producers using irrigation practices that conserve water. Also in recent years, RMA has offered premium benefits to producers to plant cover crops through the Pandemic Cover Crop Program and provided coverage for producers who [split apply nutrients](#). Learn more on RMA's [Conservation and Crop Insurance webpage](#).

More Information

Across USDA, agencies like RMA and NRCS are working to improve programs to better support the needs of producers. For example, NRCS is streamlining its Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, part of its efforts to strengthen implementation of the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The Inflation Reduction Act – part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda – provided \$19.5 billion of additional funding for NRCS conservation programs.

USDA Hosts Informational Workshops on Newly Expanded Nursery Insurance Option

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has [expanded its Nursery Value Select \(NVS\) crop insurance](#) program to all counties in all states, and the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) is encouraging interested nursery producers to learn more about the program through upcoming informational workshops. These sessions will be valuable for producers in the newly expanded areas and especially for the Nursery Field Grown and Container (FG&C) crop insurance program, which ends beginning with the 2026 crop year.

Nursery Value Select is a pilot program that enables nursery producers to select the dollar amount of coverage that best fits their risk management needs. Its expansion is part of RMA's efforts to provide insurance options for a broader group of producers, including specialty crop producers.

There are three Nursery Value Select workshops - two on April 18, one on July 18. [See more details here.](#)

RMA has administered the Nursery FG&C crop insurance program for nearly 30 years. However, the program relies on a partnership between RMA and a private contractor to update and maintain the Eligible Plant List and Plant Price Schedule and associated software packages. The private contractor will be closing after providing all necessary contractual obligations for the 2025 crop year. Without access to the price schedule and associated software, the Nursery FG&C program will no longer be available to nursery producers beginning with the 2026 crop year.

Nursery Value Select will be able to offer comparable but improved risk management options for those who currently have coverage with the Nursery FG&C program, making RMA's informational workshops a valuable opportunity to learn more about Nursery Value Select and any required transitions.

Prior to the expansion, Nursery Value Select was only available in select counties in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. Beginning with the 2025 crop year, Nursery Value Select **will be available in all counties in all states**. The sales closing date for the 2025 crop year is May 1, 2024, or Sept. 1, 2024, as provided in the actuarial documents.

Nursery Value Select was first available in the 2021 crop year, and producers insured more than \$460 million in liabilities in crop year 2023.

More Information

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#).

Producers can learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting their [RMA Regional Office](#).

RMA Offers New Resource for Specialty and Small-Scale Farmers

Finding the right risk management fit for your farm can feel overwhelming, especially for specialty crop and small-scale farmers and ranchers. That's why the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) created a [new searchable directory](#) of crop insurance agents who have experience selling [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection \(WFRP\)](#) and [Micro Farm](#) policies.

With 1,135 crop insurance agents listed, providing coverage in all 50 states, the process of finding the "right risk management fit" just got easier.

In addition to the new directory, there are other resources available for specialty crop producers including regional specialists located in each of the [RMA regional offices](#). Feedback is crucial to continually improving risk management options, and specialty crop producers can reach out with suggestions or questions by e-mailing SpecialtyCrops@usda.gov.

Specialty crop and small-scale producers are encouraged to use the [new searchable directory](#) and visit the [RMA Specialty Crops page](#).

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection

The first of its kind, WFRP recognizes diversification found on specialty and small-scale farms. With WFRP producers can insure their entire operation including crops, livestock, and nursery production, under one policy. Another advantage of WFRP coverage, is it bridges the insurance gap for several specialty crops that don't currently have individual policies available.

Micro Farm

Also included in WFRP, the Micro Farm option gives smaller operations more streamlined insurance options. It provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on your farm under one insurance policy. This insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$350,000 in approved revenue, including farms with specialty or organic commodities (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity preserved, specialty, or direct markets.



USDA in South Dakota

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