



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - April 30, 2024

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

- [From the FSA State Executive Director](#)
- [From the NRCS State Conservationist](#)
- [USDA Partners with FarmRaise to Offer Educational Tools and Resources to Promote Financial Access and Equity for Agricultural Producers](#)
- [USDA Launches New Bobwhite Conservation Pilot in Texas, Enhancing Opportunities for Producers and Wildlife](#)
- [USDA Reminds Producers of Climate-Smart Opportunities Using Farm Loan Programs](#)
- [Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Texas](#)
- [USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Veterans Webinar Series](#)
- [Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans](#)
- [Ask USDA Available to Answer Questions About FSA Programs](#)
- [Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Nomination to United Sorghum Checkoff Program Board](#)

From the FSA State Executive Director



Earlier this month, FSA hosted a virtual County Committee Symposium for our producer-elected County Committee members across the state. At my request and the request of the Texas FSA State Committee, staff hosted a much-needed training — a training that was, by all accounts, a resounding success. I've heard from Committee members and FSA staff

alike that the training — focused on the administrative roles essential to delivering the agency's extensive portfolio of farm programs and farm loan programs — was beneficial to the work they do in FSA's county offices. At the state and county levels, we want to be sure that everyone has the training needed to serve our producers efficiently, effectively and equitably.

A key update from the national level; [FarmRaise, Inc.](#), under a cooperative agreement with FSA, 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.

In addition to a new [LIP Decision Tool](#) discussed in this month's newsletter, the FarmRaise educational hub offers several, easily navigated farm loan programs how-to videos designed to introduce producers to FSA's many farm loan programs options and guide them through the application process. More farm program resources and tools are being developed. Cooperators and agricultural producers are encouraged to visit the FarmRaise educational hub often to access all available resources.

Along the urban agriculture front, we officially have the Houston Urban County Committee in place and they held their first meeting earlier this week. This Committee, in addition to the Dallas Urban County Committee, are instrumental to the successful delivery of FSA programs and are charged with administering programs and providing feedback on the USDA needs and resources urban producers need. You can read more about FSA's Urban County Committees in the [Urban County Committee Fact Sheet](#).

At the moment, we don't have any imminent deadlines, but, in the meantime, I encourage you to check in with your local FSA office to see if there's anything you might need to take care of now, while it's quieter than usual for FSA because I'm certain it won't be quiet for long – acreage certification is just around the corner and we'll be busier than ever again.

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins
State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency - Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist

As we head into late spring, there is no better time to reach out to the local NRCS office to find out more about we can help you achieve the conservation goals on your land. NRCS offers a suite of programs and services that are available to all agricultural producers no matter the size of the operation.

USDA [announced](#) the availability of \$1.5 billion for conservation and climate solutions through the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP), with funding opportunities for both [RCPP Classic](#) and [RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements](#) (AFA). Proposals are accepted until **July 2, 2024**. More details on RCPP funding opportunities are available on [grants.gov](#).



NRCS Texas announced opportunities for partners to receive funding through agreements as part of the [Texas Partners for Conservation Program](#). Proposals must be submitted via [grants.gov](#) by **May 22, 2024**. For assistance with the application process, applicants may contact grants.gov support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

NRCS Texas announced an additional sign-up period for the [National Water Quality Initiative \(NWQI\)](#) in four priority watershed areas: Aransas River, Big Elm Creek, Lake Lavon and Lampasas River. NWQI is designed to help individual agricultural producers take actions to reduce runoff of sediment, nutrients and pathogens into surface waters where the water

quality is of critical concern. Applications for this opportunity must be submitted by **May 17, 2024**, to be considered for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2024.

Through record funding allocations for conservation efforts, there are many opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and landowners to sustain and safeguard their land.

For example, Julie Mattox, a farmer from Yantis, Texas, began a journey to restore a Savannah landscape on her farm. By partnering with NRCS and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Mattox received the technical and financial resources to implement conservation practices needed to achieve her goals. For more information, read the full story, "[Restoring a Savannah Landscape in a Suburban Rural Neighborhood](#)," on the NRCS Texas website.

To learn more about NRCS programs, producers can contact their [local service center](#). Producers can also apply for NRCS programs, manage conservation plans and contracts, and view and print conservation maps by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

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

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) today 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.

Current FarmRaise Tools and Resources

[FarmRaise, Inc.](#) 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.

The newly launched LIP Decision Tool assists livestock producers who suffered losses from eligible adverse weather events and other causes of loss as well as cooperators who are helping disaster-impacted livestock producers navigate available federal disaster assistance programs. The optional decision tool gives producers guidance on what is needed to gather and submit required loss documentation, reducing the amount of time needed to complete

applications and enabling FSA county office staff to deliver much-needed assistance faster. Using this tool, however, is not an application for benefits or a determination of eligibility.

Through use of the LIP tool, livestock producers can provide supporting documentation, inventory numbers, and loss numbers to FSA county offices. Doing so, in advance of the initial county office visit, will help FSA staff serve customers more effectively and efficiently. Producers will also need to complete an application for LIP assistance and, upon request, may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation.

[LIP](#) offers payments to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by qualifying adverse weather events. LIP also covers losses due to eligible diseases and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. This includes attacks by wolves and predatory birds.

In addition to the new LIP Decision Tool, the FarmRaise educational hub offers several, easily navigated farm loan programs how-to videos designed to introduce producers to FSA's many farm loan programs options and guide them through the application process.

More FSA program resources and tools will soon be added to the FarmRaise educational hub. Cooperators and agricultural producers are encouraged to visit the FarmRaise educational hub often to access all available resources.

About the Partnership

USDA cooperators are organizations on the frontlines of access and often are the first point of contact connecting farmers to USDA programs. The partnership between FarmRaise, Inc. and FSA, through a cooperative agreement, aims to improve producer participation and customer experience in USDA programs through education and technical assistance to young, beginning, and small-scale to mid-sized producers, producers with disabilities, and veterans.

By developing a digital educational hub that delivers free, user-friendly, producer and cooperator-tested resources USDA and FarmRaise, Inc. will help FSA expedite program delivery to agricultural producers. The hub offers how-to videos and visual aids that educate producers about FSA programs and prepares them for submitting applications for program participation.

More Information

For more information about FSA farm and farm loan programs, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA Service Center - farmers.gov/service-center-locator. To learn more about FarmRaise, visit [Farmraise.com](https://farmraise.com).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

USDA Launches New Bobwhite Conservation Pilot in Texas, 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 Texas 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 'Bobscapes' App

NRCS and Quail Forever are also supporting northern bobwhite conservation with a new "Bobscapes" 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.

USDA Reminds Producers of Climate-Smart Opportunities Using Farm Loan Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that Farm Loan Programs can be used to support a variety of climate-smart agriculture practices, which build on many practices that farmers and ranchers already use, like cover cropping, nutrient management and conservation tillage.

Climate-smart agricultural practices generate significant environmental benefits by capturing and sequestering carbon, improving water management, restoring soil health and more. Farm loan funding complements other tools to help producers adopt climate-smart practices, such as FSA’s [Conservation Reserve Program](#), [crop insurance options](#) that support conservation, and conservation programs offered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

FSA offers [multiple types of loans](#) to help farmers and ranchers start, expand or maintain a family agricultural operation. These loans can provide the capital needed to invest in climate-smart practices and equipment including the establishment of rotational grazing systems, precision agriculture equipment or machinery for conversion to no-till residue management. Additionally, for programs like Conservation Reserve Program and NRCS conservation programs where USDA and the producer share the implementation cost, a farm loan could be used for the producer’s share, if consistent with the authorized loan purpose.

Some additional ways farm loans can be leveraged to invest in climate-smart agriculture practices or equipment include:

- **Precision Agriculture Equipment** - Eligible producers could use a Term Operating Loan to purchase equipment like GPS globes, monitors, or strip till fertilizer equipment.
- **Cover Crops** - Eligible producers could use an Annual Operating Loan for seed costs.
- **No/Reduced Till** - Eligible producers could use a Term Operating Loan to purchase equipment.
- **Livestock Facility Air Scrubber or Waste Treatment** - Eligible producers could use a Farm Ownership Loan for capital improvements to livestock facilities.
- **Cross Fencing** - Eligible producers could use an Annual or Term Operating Loan to purchase fencing and installation equipment.

Visit the [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry webpage on farmers.gov](#) to learn more and see detailed examples of how an FSA farm loan can support climate-smart agriculture practices.

Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Texas

Farmers in Texas can now access county specific farming data and USDA resources all in one place via the [new farmers.gov local dashboard](#). Your farmers.gov local dashboard includes farming data and USDA resources including USDA news, commodity pricing, weather forecasts, historical climate data, past storm events, USDA service center locator and additional state resources for Texas and your county. The dashboard transforms complex data sets into easy-to-read charts and graphs to help you quickly find information that matters to you. [Local Dashboard Blog](#)

USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Veterans Webinar Series

Register for a free webinar series for military veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses on how to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prepare for a career in agriculture. This webinar series is designed to provide information about USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs and resources for the military community.

Each week we will cover different topics, including:

- **Tuesday, May 7, 2024:** Urban Agriculture, USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher programs
- **Tuesday, May 14, 2024:** Natural Resources Conservation Service programs
- **Tuesday, May 21, 2024:** Farm Service Agency loans and programs, Risk Management Agency programs

All sessions will be held **1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern.**

You only need to register once for each webinar. It's highly recommended to attend all five webinars.

[Register here](#)

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.

For more information on guaranteed loans, contact your local USDA Service Center at or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Ask USDA Available to Answer Questions About FSA Programs

Ask USDA is now available as a tool for FSA customers to ask questions about FSA programs and services.

Ask USDA, available at ask.usda.gov is similar to AskFSA, which was decommissioned Sept. 21, but it also provides information for all USDA programs. Ask USDA allows USDA customers to search for and read answers about FSA programs and services in the same location as they read about other USDA programs and services.

Customers are able to submit questions through email, chat, and phone if they need more information. This improved customer service approach provides a one-stop shopping experience that covers all of USDA's many programs.

Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Nomination to United Sorghum Checkoff Program Board

Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Board (TGSB) is the state checkoff organization for grain sorghum producers in Texas and serves as a Certified Producer Organization for nominations to the United Sorghum Checkoff Program (USCP) board. We are currently accepting nominations for a Texas producer and an At-Large producer slot on the USCP board to fill positions that will become vacant on the United Sorghum Checkoff Program Board (Board) in December 2024.

AMS's policy is that diversity of the boards, councils, and committees it oversees should reflect the diversity of their industries in terms of the experience of members, methods of production and distribution, marketing strategies, and other distinguishing factors, including

but not limited to individuals from historically underserved communities, that will bring different perspectives and ideas to the table.

The 2024 vacancies are as follows:

- One at-large producer
- Two producers in Kansas
- One producer in Texas

If you or someone you know is interested in seeking nomination for these positions, please reach out to patrick@texassorghum.org. We are particularly interested in soliciting nominations from individuals who represent diverse and underserved populations. We echo AMS's mission that diverse representation includes diversity of "experience of members, methods of production and distribution, marketing strategies, and other distinguishing factors, including but not limited to individuals from historically underserved communities, that will bring different perspectives and ideas to the table.

Please submit nominations by the end of April.

USDA in Texas



Farm Service Agency

State Executive Director

Kelly Adkins

State Committee

Debra Barrett, Committee Chair
Armando Mandujano
Angie Martin
Wesley Ratcliff
Cody Scogin

Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist

Kristy Oates

Risk Management Agency

Regional Director

Jim Bellmon