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USDA Seeks Input on New Grant Program to Strengthen Food Supply Chain, Reduce Irregular Migration and Improve Labor Protections for Farmworkers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is gathering input to help shape a recently announced planned grant program focused on improving the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain by addressing labor shortages in agriculture, reducing irregular migration through increased use of legal pathways, and improving labor protections for farmworkers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold three virtual listening sessions on Sept. 28-29 for the new farm labor stabilization and protection pilot grant program, which the Biden-Harris administration announced earlier this year as part of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.



The grant program will use up to \$65 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to provide support for agricultural employers in implementing robust labor standards to promote a safe, healthy work environment for both U.S. workers and workers hired from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.

More on the Grant Program

The program will aim to improve the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain and advance several major Administration priorities:

- *Driving U.S. economic recovery and safeguarding domestic food security by addressing current labor shortages in agriculture.* Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, agricultural employers were struggling to secure a stable workforce. The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, threatening our domestic capacity to produce a safe and robust food supply. This pilot program will help address this shortage by expanding the potential pool of workers.
- *Reducing irregular migration through the increased use of legal pathways.* The Biden-Harris administration has taken numerous steps to address the elevated levels of irregular migration from Northern Central America. The H-2A visa program offers a lawful pathway for individuals from these countries to come to the United States to engage in temporary or seasonal agricultural work. An effective H-2A visa program is critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. This pilot program will aim to address challenges that both workers and employers face in utilizing the program.
- *Improving working conditions for farmworkers.* Strong and safe working conditions are critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. Through this pilot program, USDA will support efforts to improve working conditions for both U.S. and H-2A workers and ensure that H-2A workers are not subjected to unfair recruitment practices.

Agricultural Employer Organizations

FSA will hold a listening session for agricultural employer organizations on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 11 a.m. ET. FSA seeks input on:

- Challenges that employers face in securing a stable workforce.
- The set of incentives employers seek from USDA in order to improve their ability to hire workers from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.
- The labor standards that will make meaningful progress towards ensuring a safer and fairer working environment for both domestic and H-2A farmworkers.

Labor Unions and Farmworker Advocacy Community

FSA will hold a listening session for labor unions on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 2 p.m. ET, and one for the broader farmworker advocacy community on Thursday, Sept. 29 at 2 p.m. ET. From both groups, FSA seeks input on:

- Barriers or challenges faced by farmworkers, specifically those from northern Central American countries participating in the H-2A visa program.
- Recommendations to enhance farmworker protections and to increase farmworker awareness of resources and worker rights.

How to Attend

Register online at fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers. FSA will also consider comments received by 30 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register. Find more details in the [Sept. 21 notice on the Federal Register](#) or on fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers.

2022 Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of America's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Taken every five years, the census provides valuable information used at the local, state, and national levels to plan for the future.

The census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state, county, and county equivalent in the nation. By participating in the census, you help show the value and importance of U.S. agriculture.

Your Voice

The census gives you and other producers a voice. Completing your census form is your opportunity to tell how American agriculture provides food, fuel, feed, and fiber to the world.

Join this collective voice by responding to the census with information about your farm or ranch. You have the information and power to influence decisions that will shape the future of your operation, community, and industry.

Your Future

Your response provides input for future agricultural planning and decision making. The information collected helps USDA work with other organizations and rural communities to develop short-term and long-term improvements, strategies, and safeguards to better serve you.

Results from the 2022 Census of Agriculture will play a role in determining future decisions about:

- Agricultural research
- Beginning farmer programs
- Conservation programs
- New agricultural technologies
- Production practices
- Rural economic development
- Telecommunications connectivity (i.e. broadband expansion)
- Transportation and marketing locations and more...

Your Opportunity

The information you supply in your census response is important -- regardless of the size or type of your operation. Some of the information you provide is not collected by any other means and helps to provide new tools, resources, and reports. The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, and your opportunity.

USDA will begin data collection for the 2022 Census of Agriculture in November 2022. Please respond in one of the following ways:

- Online at www.agcounts.usda.gov. Online reporting is fast, user friendly, and secure.
- By mail. Fill out the census questionnaire and return it in the prepaid envelope provided.

Your response to the Census of Agriculture is required by law (Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113).



USDA Updates Livestock Insurance Options to Offer Better Protection, Flexibility

USDA has updated three key crop insurance options for livestock producers: the Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP), Livestock Gross Margin (LGM), and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP). USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) revised the insurance options to reach more producers, offer greater flexibility for protecting their operations, and ultimately, better meet the needs of the country's swine, dairy, and cattle producers. The updates were published last week for the 2023 crop year, which begins July 1, 2022.



DRP is designed to insure against unexpected declines in the quarterly revenue from milk sales relative to a guaranteed coverage level; LGM protects against the loss of gross margin (or livestock's market value minus feed costs); and LRP provides protection against price declines.

Producers will now have more flexibility for DRP, LGM, and LRP, when indemnities are used to pay premiums, which can help producers manage their operation's cash flow. With these updates, producers can now have both LGM and LRP policies, although they cannot insure the same class of livestock for the same time period or have the same livestock insured under multiple policies.

Additional updates by insurance option include:

Dairy Revenue Protection

- Dairy producers are now able to continue coverage even if they experience a disaster, such as a barn fire, at their operation.

Livestock Gross Margin

- Cattle, Dairy, and Swine coverage has been expanded, making it available in all counties in all 50 states.

Livestock Risk Protection

- Insurance companies are now required to pay indemnities within 30 days, rather than the previous 60 days, following the receipt of the claim form.
- Head limits have been increased:
 - o Fed Cattle: 12,000 head per endorsement and 25,000 head per crop year
 - o Feeder Cattle: 12,000 head per endorsement and 25,000 head per crop year
 - o Swine: 70,000 head per endorsement and 750,000 head per crop year
- The termination date under LRP has been extended from June 30 to August 31
- Location reporting requirements have been relaxed to list only state and county, instead of the precise legal location.

Learn more on [RMA's Livestock Insurance Plans webpage](#). 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](#).

New Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers

A new multi-agency guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available. If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you.

This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency. The guide is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on farmers.gov/translations.



USDA to Invest up to \$300 million in New Organic Transition Initiative

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced details of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) \$300 million investment, including with American Rescue Plan funds, in a new Organic Transition Initiative that will help build new and better markets and streams of income for farmers and producers. Organic production allows producers to hold a unique position in the marketplace and thus take home a greater share of the food dollar.

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, the number of non-certified organic farms actively transitioning to organic production dropped by nearly 71 percent since 2008. Through the comprehensive support provided by this initiative USDA hopes to reverse this trend, opening opportunities for new and beginning farmers and expanding direct consumer access to organic foods through increased production.

The initiative will deliver wrap-around technical assistance, including farmer-to-farmer mentoring; provide direct support through conservation financial assistance and additional crop insurance assistance, and support market development projects in targeted markets.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are the primary agencies supporting the Initiative, which will focus on three areas.

Transition to Organic Partnership Program

Through this initiative, USDA aims to ensure that farmers transitioning to organic have the support they need to navigate that transition, including a full supply chain to American consumers who demand organic choices in their supermarkets daily. AMS will build partnership networks in six regions across the United States with trusted local organizations serving direct farmer training, education, and outreach activities. The organizations will connect transitioning farmers with mentors, building paid mentoring networks to share practical insights and advice. Each regional team will also provide community building, including train-the-mentor support; as well as technical assistance, workshops, and field days covering topics including organic production practices, certification, conservation planning, business development (including navigating the supply chain), regulations, and marketing to help transitioning and recently transitioned producers overcome technical, cultural, and financial shifts during and immediately following certification. USDA will provide up to \$100 million for this program.

Direct Farmer Assistance

NRCS will develop a new Organic Management conservation practice standard and offer financial and technical assistance to producers who implement the practice. Payments will be modeled on those already available to producers meeting the existing nutrient and pest management conservation practice standards. USDA will provide \$75 million for this effort. This will include an increase in organic expertise throughout its regions, creating organic experts at each of its regional technology support centers. These experts will train

staff who provide direct services to USDA customers. These services include hosting hands-on organic training for state and field NRCS staff and fielding organic-related staff questions.

USDA will provide \$25 million to RMA for the new Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (TOGA) which will support transitioning and certain certified organic producers' participation in crop insurance, including coverage of a portion of their insurance premium.

Organic Pinpointed Market Development Support

Stakeholders have shared that specific organic markets have market development risks due to inadequate organic processing capacity and infrastructure, a lack of certainty about market access, and insufficient supply of certain organic ingredients. This AMS initiative will focus on key organic markets where the need for domestic supply is high, or where additional processing and distribution capacity is needed for more robust organic supply chains. Examples of markets seeking support include organic grain and feed; legumes and other edible rotational crops; and livestock and dairy. USDA will invest up to \$100 million to help improve organic supply chains in pinpointed markets. The Department will seek stakeholder input on these pinpointed initiatives beginning in September, resulting in an announcement of specific policy initiatives later this year.

Other USDA Organic Assistance

This USDA initiative complements [existing assistance for organic producers](#), including FSA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) and Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP). OCCSP helps producers obtain or renew their organic certification, and OTECP provides additional funding to certified and transitioning producers during the pandemic.

[NRCS offers conservation programs](#), such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which can provide assistance to help with managing weeds and pests, and establishing high tunnels, improving soil health, and implementing other practices key to organic operations. RMA also administers federal crop insurance options available to organic producers, including [Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#) and [Micro Farm](#).

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage

For the 2022 crop year, NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA.

However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends. If an independent assessment is used to determine the loss, producers have 180 days to file an application for payment.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

USDA Invests \$14.5 Million in Taxpayer Education, Program Outreach Efforts for Farmers and Ranchers

FSA is investing in two outreach and education efforts for farmers and ranchers, including those who are new to agriculture or who have been historically underserved by programs.

First, FSA is announcing \$10 million in the new Taxpayer Education and Asset Protection Initiative. Through this initiative, FSA has partnered with the University of Arkansas and the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee to deliver tax education resources for farmers and ranchers, which includes engagement with agricultural educators, and tax professionals through partnerships with community groups and minority serving institutions across the country.

Second, FSA is investing \$4.5 million in outreach for the Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentives Program (CRP TIP), which increases access to land for new farmers and ranchers. FSA will award cooperative agreements to 15 to 20 partner and stakeholder organizations to conduct outreach and technical assistance and promote awareness and understanding among agricultural communities, particularly those who are military veterans, new to farming, or historically underserved.

FSA Offers Assistance for Flooding Feed and Grazing Losses

If you've suffered livestock feed or grazing losses due to recent flooding, you could be eligible for assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

ELAP covers physically damaged or destroyed livestock feed that was purchased, or mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs intended for use as feed for **your** eligible livestock. In order to be considered eligible, harvested forage must be baled. Forage that is only cut, raked or windrowed is not eligible. You must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

ELAP also covers up to 180 lost grazing days in instances when you've been forced to remove livestock from a grazing pasture due to wildfire.

You should maintain records and receipts documenting that livestock were removed from the grazing pasture due to flood, costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts, feed purchase receipts and the number of gallons of water transported to livestock due to water shortages.

For beekeepers, ELAP covers beehive losses (the physical structure) in instances where the hive has been destroyed by a natural disaster including flooding. For honeybee losses, you must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent.

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

USDA Provides Local Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

The first 10 years of a farming or ranching operation are tough. USDA recognizes you need dedicated support to help make sense of all the information coming your way. Now each state has a Beginning Farmer and Rancher team headed up by a state coordinator. The coordinator helps producers who have operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 years navigate USDA and partner resources.

To find your State coordinator, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers/coordinators/. For more beginning farmer and rancher information, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers.

USDA Announces Updates for Honeybee Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced updates to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) specific to honeybee producers.

For honeybees, ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

Updates include:

- Starting in 2020, you have 15 days from when the loss is first apparent, instead of 30 days, to file a honeybee notice of loss, which provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey.
- ELAP will now run according to the calendar year. Since you are still required to apply for payment within 30 calendar days of the end of the program year, the new signup deadline for calendar year 2021 losses is January 30, 2022.
- If you were paid for the loss of a honeybee colony or hive in either or both of the previous two years, you will be required to provide additional documentation to substantiate how your current year inventory was acquired.
- If the honeybee colony loss was caused by Colony Collapse Disorder, you must provide a producer certification that the loss was a direct result of at least three of the five symptoms of Colony Collapse Disorder, which include:
 - the loss of live queen and/or drone bee populations inside the hives;
 - rapid decline of adult worker bee population outside the hives, leaving brood poorly or completely unattended;
 - absence of dead adult bees inside the hive and outside the entrance of the hive;
 - absence of robbing collapsed colonies; and
 - at the time of collapse, varroa mite and Nosema populations are not at levels known to cause economic injury or population decline.

For more information contact the local County USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov/recover.

Beginning Farmer Loan Opportunity

Accessing capital to begin, extend or support an agriculture operation can be especially challenging to new producers. Farm Service Agency's "Beginning Farmer" direct and guaranteed loan programs provide an opportunity for qualified applicants to secure loans from funding set aside for producers who meet the following conditions:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

For more information contact, 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.

Filing CCC-941 Adjusted Gross Income Certifications

If you have experienced delays in receiving Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) payments, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Market Gains on Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs), it may be because you have not filed form CCC-941, *Adjusted Gross Income Certification*.

If you don't have a valid CCC-941 on file for the applicable crop year you will not receive payments. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should IMMEDIATELY file the form with their recording county FSA office. Farm operators and tenants are encouraged to ensure that their landowners have filed the form.

FSA can accept the CCC-941 for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Unlike the past, you must have the CCC-941 certifying your AGI compliance before any payments can be issued.

USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced another installment (phase) in assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021. More than 18,000 producers will soon receive new or updated pre-filled disaster applications to offset eligible crop losses. Approximately \$6.4 billion has already been distributed to 165,000 producers through USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

FSA will begin mailing pre-filled applications in late August to producers who have potentially eligible losses and:

- Received crop insurance indemnities for qualifying 2020 and 2021 disaster events after May 2, 2022.
- Received crop insurance indemnities associated with Nursery, Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) and Margin Protection (MP) policies.
- New primary policyholders not included in the initial insured producer Phase 1 mailing from May 25, 2022, because their claim records had not been filled.
- Certain 2020 prevent plant losses related to qualifying 2020 disaster events that had only been recorded in crop insurance records as related to 2019 adverse weather events and, as such, were not previously provided in applications sent earlier this year.
- New Substantial Beneficial Interest (SBI) records, including SBIs where tax identification numbers were corrected.

Producers are expected to receive assistance direct deposited into their bank account within three business days after they sign and return the pre-filled application to the FSA county office and the county office enters the application into the system.

Before applying any program payment factors or eligibility criteria, it is estimated that this next installment (phase) may generate about \$756 million in assistance.

Emergency Relief Payments to Date

This emergency relief under ERP complements ERP assistance recently provided to more than 165,000 producers who had received crop insurance indemnities and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments for qualifying losses. USDA has processed more than 255,000 applications for ERP, and to date, has made approximately \$6.4 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

Phase Two

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP will be aimed at filling gaps and provide assistance to producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing risk management programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

More Information

In addition, on Aug. 18, 2022, USDA published a technical correction to the [Notice of Funds Availability](#) for ERP and ELRP to clarify how income from the sale of farm equipment and the provision of production inputs and services to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and farm operations are to be considered in the calculation of average adjusted gross farm income. Producers whose average adjusted gross farm income is at least 75% of the producer's the average Adjusted Gross Income can gain access to a higher payment limitation.

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are authorized by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit [FSA's Emergency Relief webpage](#). A [new public-facing dashboard](#) on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty– specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard every Monday.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll will need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit farmers.gov and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).



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