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General Conservation Reserve Program Signup Begins for 2023

Agriculture producers and landowners may submit offers into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through **April 7, 2023**. Under the CRP program producers and landowners can establish long-term, resource-conserving practices, that are designed 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.

FSA also offers several other enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative (CLEAR30), the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watershed, has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices. Under this administration, FSA also moved SAFE practices back to the Continuous CRP signup, giving producers and landowners more opportunities to participate in the initiative. Through the FWP, producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP as part of their efforts to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, to improve both vegetation and water flow.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Disaster Assistance Availability through FSA

FSA can provide assistance to producer who have suffered losses endured from adverse weather events. This assistance can be provided through FSA's Emergency Loan Program or one of its many disaster programs such as Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), Livestock Forage Program (LFP), Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or the Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

All producers wishing to obtain federal assistance through FSA should contact their local FSA office as soon as possible as it is important to note that Notice of Losses (NOL) for programs such as ELAP, LIP, NAP, and TAP are required to be filed timely and may be filed by phone, email, or by appointment. NOL deadlines by program are as follows:

- ELAP – 15 days for honeybee losses and 30 days for all livestock losses
- LIP – 30 days for all livestock losses
- NAP – 15 days for all covered crops
- TAP – 90 days for tree losses

Please note that some programs such as ECP, EFRP, Emergency Loans (EM), and TAP require that environmental reviews are complete prior to actions being taken that are associated with the application. It is critical that **no work begins prior to receiving notice of approval from FSA on the required environmental review. Failure to allow the necessary environmental review to be complete prior to actions being taken, may result in disapproval of the application.

NAP Coverage for 2023 Spring-Planted Crops

For crops that are not insurable with catastrophic level coverage (CAT) through your crop insurance agent, Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage is an available tool to help mitigate financial risk. NAP covers non-insurable crops damaged, lost or prevented from being planted due to a natural weather-related disaster condition.

There are several coverage level options through this program. NAP provides a catastrophic level (CAT) of coverage for losses that exceed 50 percent of the expected yield at 55 percent of the approved NAP price for the crop. Higher levels of coverage are available to cover 50 to 65 percent of expected crop year, set in 5 percent increments, based on 100 percent of the approved NAP price. Producers who elect a higher level of coverage must "buy-up" and pay a premium in addition to the service fee. Producers with an organic certification can select the organic option when requesting NAP coverage at either CAT or buy-up levels of coverage at 100 percent of the approved organic NAP price. Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

Premium costs for buy-up coverage on yield-based crops will be calculated based on the lesser of either of the following:

- The applicable payment limitation (\$300,000 for buy-up) X 5.25% premium fee = \$15,750 maximum premium per individual or legal entity, or
- The sum of acres X APH yield X share X coverage level X NAP price X 5.25% premium fee for each NAP crop with buy-up coverage selected.

NAP payment limitation for basic coverage remains at \$125,000 per individual or legal entity. Beginning, limited resource, and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a NAP premium reduction.

NAP service fee is \$325 per crop per county, up to \$825 per county, not to exceed \$1,950 per producer with NAP covered crops in multiple counties. A waiver of the NAP service fee is available to beginning, limited resource, and traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers.

NAP coverage for eligible 2023 crops should be purchased at least 1 day before the crop is planted, but no later than the established NAP application for coverage closing date for the crop or crops listed as follows:

March 15, 2023 – 2023 artichokes, beets (for seed or fresh), buckwheat, camelina, carrots (for fresh or processing), hemp, mustard, radish (for seed or fresh), small grain forage (wheat, barley, oats, peas), and any other spring planted crops not mentioned in other closing dates.

NAP application for coverage deadlines are also posted on the Washington State FSA website located [here](#). Contact your local county FSA office if you are interested in applying for NAP coverage, or if you have any questions regarding NAP availability or application closing dates.

Report Damage or Loss of NAP Covered Crops Immediately

If winter weather causes damage to or loss of your 2023 NAP covered perennial and/or fall planted crops, you must report this to your local FSA county office.

NAP notices of loss can be initiated by phone, email, or fax, but must be submitted in writing, to your local FSA county office for weather related events or adverse natural occurrences that cause damage to or loss of the NAP covered crop. To report crop damage or loss you must complete, sign, and file the loss portion of form CCC-576 with your FSA office by the earlier of either of the following:

- **15 calendar days** after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop or commodity first becomes apparent or
- **15 calendar days** after the normal harvest date.

Please note, producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA **within 72 hours** of when a loss becomes apparent.

While some FSA county offices are closed to the public as a health and safety precaution, offices will take initial NAP notice of loss notifications via phone, email, or fax. Offices will assist producers in completing the official CCC-576 Notice of Loss Form as best as possible, sending the form to producers via email, fax, or mail for final review and signature. The completed and signed CCC-576 should then be returned to the county office as soon as possible via email, fax, or mail. **A CCC-576 is not considered filed until it has been signed and returned to FSA.**

As the 2023 crop year progresses, it is imperative that a notice of loss is filed (for all affected NAP covered crops) within the timeframe noted above for each weather-related event or adverse natural occurrence. This will ensure FSA is notified that your NAP covered crop or crops have been damaged or lost. If the loss event is approved, remember to provide your crop production to your local FSA county office within 60 days after harvest or request an appraisal within 60 days of the normal harvest date so that the payment portion of form CCC-576 can be filed timely.

When a covered crop is lost or damage is significant, replanting is required if feasible and the final planting date has not passed. When you determine that the crop will be destroyed, abandoned, or not taken to harvest as intended, you must report this to your local FSA office so a field visit can be conducted by a certified loss adjuster. Once the crop appraisal has been completed, the loss adjuster will release the field and you can destroy the covered crop acres and replant to a different crop or harvest the acres for a different use.

Remember, failure to timely notify your FSA county office of NAP covered crop damage or loss will result in denial of NAP payment benefits. Destroying NAP covered crop acres or harvesting for a different use without a loss adjuster appraisal will result in those acres being determined ineligible for NAP payment benefits.

If you have any questions about NAP policy requirements, contact your local [county FSA office](#) for more information.

2022 Marketing Assistance Loans Still Available

FSA Marketing Assistance Loans are still available for harvested commodities. A loan can provide you with interim financing to meet cash flow needs without selling your harvested crop at a time when market prices are at harvest-time lows. Your 2022 harvested farm-stored or warehouse-stored commodity is used as collateral for the loan. Marketing Assistance Loans mature 9 months after the month loan funds are disbursed to you, with repayment due at loan maturity. Before moving farm-stored loan collateral, you must contact the county FSA office and obtain an authorization to move the collateral. Producers who have a commodity pledged as collateral for a marketing assistance loan can purchase a commodity certificate that can be immediately exchanged for the outstanding loan collateral in situations when the loan rate exceeds the exchange rate. Producers who are eligible for marketing assistance loans can obtain a loan deficiency payment (LDP) in lieu of a loan. LDP's are available when the posted county

price for a crop falls below the county loan rate. You can check the daily LDP rates online at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/Index> .

FSA is still accepting requests for 2022 MALs for all eligible harvested commodities. The final date to request a MAL for 2022 wheat, barley, oats, honey, canola, crambe, flaxseed, rapeseed, and sesame seed is **March 31, 2023**. The final date to request a MAL for 2022 corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, rice, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, and sunflower seeds is **May 31, 2023**.

For a commodity to be eligible for a loan or certificate, you must have beneficial interest in the commodity which is defined as having title, possession, and control of the commodity. The quality of stored collateral must be maintained, and you are responsible for loss or damage to the commodity through the term of the loan. To retain eligibility for an LDP when beneficial interest in your harvested crop will be lost upon delivery, you must file form CCC-633 EZ Page 1 with your local FSA office prior to loss of beneficial interest.

If you are interested, please contact [your local FSA county office](#) to learn more about Marketing Assistance Loans.

March 15th Deadline- Don't Miss Out on ARCPLC

Agricultural producers can now change election and enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage](#) programs for the 2023 crop year, two key safety net programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Signup began Oct. 17, 2022, and producers have until **March 15, 2023**, to enroll in these two programs. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started issuing payments totaling more than \$255 million to producers with 2021 crops that have triggered payments through ARC or PLC.

2023 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2023 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2023, they must sign a new contract.

If producers do not submit their election by the **March 15, 2023** deadline, their election remains the same as their 2022 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to obtain basic information regarding the decision and factors that should be taken into consideration such as future commodity prices and historic yields to estimate payments for 2023.

Crop Insurance Considerations and Decision Deadline

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans. Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Producers should contact their crop insurance agent to make certain that the election and enrollment made at FSA follows their intention to participate in SCO coverage. Producers have until March 15, 2023, to make the appropriate changes or cancel their ARC or PLC contract.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact your local county office

USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form will be available starting March 1, 2023.

“USDA is committed to improving our farm loan processes to better serve all of our borrowers,” said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. “We’re consistently looking for ways to make the application process easier to navigate, so more producers are able to complete it. Our new direct loan application is a critical step forward in our efforts to improve customer service and build equity into not just our programs but also our services.”

Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the ‘Get Started’ button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The simplified direct loan application and Loan Assistance Tool are the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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 safe, 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](https://www.usda.gov).

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Vacancy Announcements for Permanent FSA Positions in WA State

Whitman County - Program Technicians

The Farm Service Agency office located in Colfax, WA is accepting applications for 2 Full-Time Permanent Program Technician positions. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements are posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov. The positions close March 7, 2023. The salary ranges from \$34,584 to \$60,703 per year. **Candidates may qualify for a 25% recruitment incentive for this position.**

Lewis County - Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Chehalis, WA will be accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Program Technician position. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements, salary range, and closing date will be posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov.

Yakima County - Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Yakima, WA will be accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Program Technician position. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements, salary range, and closing date will be posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov.

Okanogan County – County Executive Director (CED)

The Farm Service Agency office located in Okanogan, WA will be accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent County Executive Director position. Duties include directing and managing program and administrative operations for Okanogan and Ferry Counties. This is a unique opportunity where the FSA CED position is open to external candidates. On the job training will be available. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements, salary range, and closing date will be posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov.

FSA Looking for Part-time Assistance in Various Locations

Washington State Farm Service Agency (FSA) is hiring part-time, Temporary Program Technician (PT), positions in **Chelan County, Skagit County, Spokane County, Walla Walla, and Yakima County**. This is a great opportunity for students or those that can only commit to a part-time schedule.

Duties include general office activities supporting FSA programs administered at the field level. Successful applicants must be reliable, have a professional attitude, enjoy working with the public. The Spokane position will require a valid driver's license for day travel to local offices in Lincoln, Adams, and Whitman counties. The hourly rate depends on education and experience and ranges from \$16.14 to \$32.35.

Applicant closing dates will vary by location. If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please share this information with them. To apply please submit a copy of your resume to the following. You may also contact the number listed for specific questions regarding the position:

- Chelan County limon@usda.gov 509-415-3689
- Skagit County chamberlain@usda.gov 360-488-4814
- Spokane County martin@usda.gov 509-323-3036
- Walla Walla County betts@usda.gov 509-404-3081
- Yakima County delamora@usda.gov and jose.limon@usda.gov 509-415-3689

Important Dates and Deadlines

March 1, 2023 – Deadline to file a 2022 LIP Application for Payment and to provide supporting documentation for the application. Also, the deadline to submit all eligibility documentation for 2019, 2020, and 2021 ARCPLC payments.

March 15, 2023 – Deadline to elect a program and enroll in 2023 ARC/PLC.

March 15, 2023 – Deadline to obtain 2023 crop year NAP coverage for artichokes, beets (for seed or fresh), buckwheat, camelina, carrots (for fresh or processing), hemp, mustard, radish (for seed or fresh), small grain forage (wheat, barley, oats, peas), and any other spring planted crops not mentioned in other closing dates.

March 31, 2023 – Final date to request a MAL for 2022 wheat, barley, oats, honey, canola, crambe, flaxseed, rapeseed, and sesame seed.

April 1, 2023 – Beginning of the Primary Nesting Season for CRP. Activities on established CRP stands are prohibited April 1 through July 1 unless specifically authorized by FSA on a contract-by-contract basis.

April 7, 2023 – Deadline to submit General CRP contract offers for 2023.

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