
August 2020



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

GovDelivery

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [Alaska FSA State Directors News](#)
- [Enrollment Period Begins for USDA's Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program](#)
- [USDA Encourages Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines](#)
- [Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation](#)
- [Additional Commodities Eligible for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program](#)
- [USDA Investigates Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China](#)
- [USDA Service Centers Resuming Office Visits in Some Locations While Taking Precautionary Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus](#)

Alaska State FSA Newsletter

Alaska State Farm Service Agency

800 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.
Ste 216
Palmer, AK 99645
www.fsa.usda.gov/ak

State Executive

Director Bryan J. Scoresby
907-761-7750
Cell: 907-707-4819
Email:
bryan.scoresby@usda.gov

Alaska FSA State Directors News

Farmers Markets are all over the place this year. Families are selling product on new roadside stands at the driveway. The list of markets provided by AK Div. of Agriculture is long and impressive of the hard and determined work provided by dedicated farmers. The variety and volume of Alaskan Grown produce for sale is incredible. My family needed dill to make pickles with and I found some at a farmer's market. I looked at one farmer's product list online and was shocked at the length of the long list of individual vegetables and herbs offered for sale. Ingenious growers have figured out a way to grow most everything in Alaska that can be grown anywhere and everywhere else. Visiting farmers market keeps grocery dollars at home and the Division of Agriculture's \$5.00 challenge ongoing.

Let me say that one measure of gardening success for Alaskan is the tomato. If you grow tomatoes here in Alaska, you're considered

Northern County Office
PO Box 585
Delta Junction, AK 99737

**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan
Manager**

Lloyd Wilhelm
907-895-4242 ext 150
Fax: 855-711-9095
Email:
lloyd.wilhelm@usda.gov

Southern County Office
800 W Evergreen, Ste 216
Palmer, AK 99645

**County Executive
Director/Farm Loan
Manager**

Erin Sturdivant
907-761-7754
Fax: 907-761-7789
Email:
erin.sturdivant@usda.gov

Hours Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Committee Meetings:
Northern Co TBA
Southern Co Sept. 8, 10 a.m.

Please contact your local FSA
Office for questions specific to
your operation or county.

a masterful gardener. Sweet corn may have similar considerations. Successful gardeners can raise potatoes, zucchini, cabbage, peas and carrots with work, but also relative ease. Adding tomatoes takes gardening to a whole new level of accomplishment.

The tomato originated in South America and was consumed there as early as 700 A.D. It was imported into Europe in the 16th century, grown as an ornamental as it was believed to be poisonous. Founding Farmer, Thomas Jefferson ate tomatoes when in France during the revolutionary war. A visionary, he sent seeds home to friends to grow and cultivate. Today, the tomato is grown in all 50 states. There are few things more satisfying in late summer than a tomato sandwich or BLT, using freshly picked tomatoes and lettuce from the garden.

Using older technology like a greenhouse really helps. Hi tunnels provide another way to grow warm season crops. Adding plastic mulch with row covers is another. Drip irrigation adds many possibilities. These growing aids have been around a long time, but not everyone has them or access to them. The hot weather crops we all love so much like tomatoes, sweet corn and winter squash are just the beginning. I know a progressive gardener who has a hi tunnel full of grapes and fruit trees. His social media post was inviting friends to bring the cream to pour over the tree ripened and freshly picked peaches to enjoy together!

In growing a garden or larger operation, adding one improvement a year keeps us occupied to do that part very well. It also keeps the expenses inline within spending budgets. Over the course of several years, one can build an impressive garden business and have a long list of individual vegetables and herbs to enjoy, share and sell.

Enrollment Period Begins for USDA's Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that the enrollment period for the [Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program \(RTCP\)](#) for fiscal year 2020 began July 13 and will run through Sept. 4.

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act 2020, reauthorized RTCP and allows farmers and ranchers in Alaska, Hawaii and insular areas including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin Islands of the United States, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Republic of Palau, to recover any costs to transport agricultural commodities or inputs used to produce an agricultural commodity.

RTCP payments are calculated based on the costs incurred for transportation of the agricultural commodity or inputs during a 12-month period, subject to an \$8,000 per producer cap per fiscal year. If claims for payments exceed the funds available from the program for a fiscal year, payments will be reduced on a pro-rata basis.

Farmers and ranchers interested in participating in RTCP can obtain applications and other documents by calling toll-free 1-866-794-1079.

To find your local FSA county office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency encourages producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

Producers can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/ActuarialInformationBrowser2018/CropCriteria.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

For Alaska, 2020 Fall deadlines for crop year 2021 coverage:

The following crops in Alaska have a NAP application deadline of September 01, 2020: **Floriculture (Peonies), Aquaculture, Turf Grass**

The following crops in Alaska have a NAP application deadline of September 30, 2020: **Perennial Grass Forage (Perennial Grasses intended use seed), Honey**

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. To learn more about NAP visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: <http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#>. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery, to predict insurance premium costs.

Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

Farmers and ranchers can use the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help.

USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will receive information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the "Start" button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial*

Information feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Additional Commodities Eligible for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced an initial list of additional commodities that have been added to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), and that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made other adjustments to the program based on comments received from agricultural producers and organizations and review of market data. Producers will be able to submit applications that include these commodities on Monday, July 13, 2020. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting through Aug. 28, 2020, applications for CFAP, which helps offset price declines and additional marketing costs because of the coronavirus pandemic. USDA expects additional eligible commodities to be announced in the coming weeks.

USDA collected comments and supporting data for consideration of additional commodities through June 22, 2020.

Changes to CFAP include:

- Adding the following commodities: alfalfa sprouts, anise, arugula, basil, bean sprouts, beets, blackberries, Brussels sprouts, celeriac (celery root), chives, cilantro, coconuts, collard greens, dandelion greens, greens (others not listed separately), guava, kale greens, lettuce – including Boston, green leaf, Lolla Rossa, oak leaf green, oak leaf red and red leaf – marjoram, mint, mustard, okra, oregano, parsnips, passion fruit, peas (green), pineapple, pistachios, radicchio, rosemary, sage, savory, sorrel, fresh sugarcane, Swiss chard, thyme and turnip top greens.
- Expanding for seven currently eligible commodities – apples, blueberries, garlic, potatoes, raspberries, tangerines and taro – CARES Act funding for sales losses because USDA found these commodities had a 5 percent or greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, these commodities were only eligible for marketing adjustments.
- Determining that peaches and rhubarb no longer qualify for payment under the CARES Act sales loss category.
- Correcting payment rates for apples, artichokes, asparagus, blueberries, cantaloupes, cucumbers, garlic, kiwifruit, mushrooms, papaya, peaches, potatoes, raspberries, rhubarb, tangerines and taro.

Additional details can be found in the Federal Register in the [Notice of Funding Availability \(NOFA\)](#) and [Final Rule Correction](#) and at www.farmers.gov/cfap.

Producers have several options for applying to the CFAP program:

1. Using an online portal, accessible at farmers.gov/cfap, allows producers with secure USDA login credentials—known as eAuthentication—to certify eligible commodities online, digitally sign applications and submit directly to the local USDA Service Center. New commodities will be available in the system on July 13, 2020.
2. Completing the application form using our CFAP Application Generator and Payment Calculator found at farmers.gov/cfap. This Excel workbook allows customers to input information specific to their operation to determine estimated payments and populate the application form, which can be printed, then signed and submitted to their local USDA Service Center. An updated version with the new commodities will be available on the website on July 13, 2020.
3. Downloading the AD-3114 application form from farmers.gov/cfap and manually completing the form to submit to the local USDA Service Center by mail, electronically or by hand delivery to an office drop box. In some limited cases, the office may be open for in-person business by appointment. Visit farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status to check the status of your local office.

USDA Service Centers can also work with producers to complete and securely transmit digitally signed applications through two commercially available tools: Box and OneSpan. Producers who are interested in digitally signing their applications should notify their local service centers when calling to discuss the CFAP application process. You can learn more about these solutions at farmers.gov/mydocs.

Getting Help from FSA

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap. For existing FSA customers, these documents are likely already on file.

USDA Investigates Packages of Unsolicited Seeds from China

USDA is aware that people across the country have received suspicious, unsolicited packages of seed that appear to be coming from China. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection, other federal agencies, and State departments of agriculture to investigate the situation.

USDA urges anyone who receives an unsolicited package of seeds to immediately contact their [State plant regulatory official](#) or [APHIS State plant health director](#). Please hold onto the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label, until someone from your State department of agriculture or APHIS contacts you with further instructions. Do not plant seeds from unknown origins.

At this time, we don't have any evidence indicating this is something other than a "brushing scam" where people receive unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost sales. USDA is currently collecting seed packages from recipients and will test their contents and determine if they contain anything that could be of concern to U.S. agriculture or the environment.

USDA is committed to preventing the unlawful entry of prohibited seeds and protecting U.S. agriculture from invasive pests and noxious weeds. Visit the [APHIS' website](#) to learn more about USDA's efforts to stop agricultural smuggling and promote trade compliance.

USDA Service Centers Resuming Office Visits in Some Locations While Taking Precautionary Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

Some USDA Service Centers in Alaska will begin allowing in-person office visits by appointment only.

All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business should call ahead to confirm the office's status and make an appointment before visiting. Visitors will be pre-screened based on health concerns or recent travel and must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors may also be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office and work with our producers in person, by phone, by email, or by using other online tools.

Online services are still available to customers, including our [new Box and OneSpan functionality](#) that enable customers to sign and share FSA and NRCS documents with USDA Service Center staff in just a few clicks. Producers can get started with a simple username and password for Box or, for OneSpan, a quick identity verification. Additional services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the [farmers.gov](#) portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Through the [FSA website](#), customers can access certain FSA programs and view FSA data, including maps, on [FSAfarm+](#). Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at [farmers.gov/sign-in](#).

For the most current updates on available services and flexibilities due to COVID-19, or to find contact information for your local Service Center [farmers.gov/coronavirus](#).

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in these meetings and/or events should contact Lloyd Wilhelm, Northern CED, at (907) 895-4242, Erin Sturdivant, Southern CED, at (907) 761-7754 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).