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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Colorado USDA Newsletter - July 12, 2023

Farm Service Agency | Natural Resources Conservation Service | Risk Management Agency

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From Colorado FSA's State Executive Director, Kent Peppler

I thought these words would never come out of my mouth considering the droughts we have endured over the past twenty years, but, honestly I think we have had enough rain.....for now. Hopefully we get some hot and dry weather so we can be done with grain harvest. The wheat crop is a mixed bag depending on where you farm and how much hail one has had. Coors tells me the barley crop is good but there are concerns about the disease problems a later harvest could have.

With all of the severe weather we have endured, you can bet climate friendly farming will be a big topic during the new farm bill discussion. At this time, I am being told the bill is moving forward and we might see a markup in September; that being said, a short extension could happen. The buzz words out of DC concerning the farm bill are conservation, CREP changes, and competition title. Please remember that buzz words are just that, buzz. Nobody is talking more money for the bill so I think we can expect some redistribution of funds according to the priorities of the Senate and House Ag committees.

Colorado is represented by Dr. Yadira Caraveo on the house side and Michael Bennet on the senate committee. I would urge all of you to please contact these two offices and give your personal thoughts on the farm bill. Grass roots participation is so important and both offices will respect your opinions.

The chairmen of the committees are Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson Jr. of Pennsylvania and Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. Both are very experienced and well respected in the agriculture industry. I am confident under their leadership we will get the best bill possible and again the Ag Committee will stand out as an example of how government should function for all of us.

As always, I wish you all good luck and of course be safe.

KP

Colorado Farm Service Agency is Hiring!

The Farm Service Agency is accepting applications for the following positions. Interested individuals may apply using the below links to [USAJOBS](https://www.usajobs.gov)



PERMANENT POSITIONS:

- **County Program Technician:**
 - [Lincoln County](#), Open 6/22-7/13
 - [Adams County](#), Open 6/22-7/13
 - [Cheyenne County](#), Open 6/22-7/13
 - [Montezuma County](#), Open 6/22-7/13
 - [Dolores County](#), Open 6/22-7/13

If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please share this information with them. Contact Claudia Drechsel at claudia.drechsel@usda.gov or 720-544-2878 if you have specific questions regarding the positions.

USDA Extends Application Deadline for Revenue Loss Programs to July 14

USDA is extending the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) to July 14, 2023, to give producers more time to apply for assistance. The original deadline was June 2. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to agricultural producers and provide assistance in completing an ERP Phase Two application. The extended deadline will give producers more time to work with these partner organizations and apply for assistance.

Cooperative Agreements for ERP Phase Two Application Assistance

Through cooperative agreements with FSA, the following organizations are providing free assistance to producers across the United States and territories.

- [Alabama State Association of Cooperatives](#)
- [Farmers Legal Action Group, INC.](#)
- [Flower Hill Institute](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council, Inc](#)
- [North South Institute](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside II](#)
- [Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA](#)
- [Rural Coalition](#)
- [Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO](#)

Depending on a producer's location, these nine partners can provide assistance either by phone or through online meeting software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

There is never a charge for technical assistance provided by FSA employees or cooperative agreement recipients. These organizations will assist producers with completing the application and any follow-up future insurance coverage requirements. Producers who receive ERP payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years. These organizations will not collect producer records, complete or sign the application form, or act on the producer's behalf in any way throughout this process.

Find more information on FSA cooperative agreements and contact information for the nine organizations please visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index.

Eligibility

To be eligible for ERP Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Assistance will be primarily to producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or NAP, since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One.

To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a 15% or greater decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a baseline year.

FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that can help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue for each respective program.

Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two and PARP assistance. Producers should also keep in mind that July 15 is a major deadline to complete acreage reports for most crops. FSA encourages producers to complete the ERP Phase Two application, PARP application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

More Information

For more information, view the [ERP Phase Two Fact Sheet](#), [PARP Fact Sheet](#), the [ERP Phase Two-PARP Comparison Fact Sheet](#), [ERP Phase Two application video tutorial](#), [PARP application video tutorial](#), [myth-buster blog](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with the Name County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

For Colorado, July 17, 2023 is the deadline for all spring seeded crops, perennial crops, Hemp and CRP. Perennial crops must be reported 15 days before the onset of harvest/grazing, but no later than July 17, 2023. The Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers in-person, via phone, email and other digital tools.

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made. Check with FSA at the local USDA Service Center for more information on continuous certification.

New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and video tutorials.

For questions, please contact [your local USDA office](#).

Report Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Losses and Apply for Payments

Report Losses

NAP provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

To receive payment, you had to purchase NAP coverage for 2023 crops and file a notice of loss the earlier of 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Apply for Payment

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 "Application for Coverage" and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops

and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment" within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA Announces Additional Assistance for Distressed Farmers Facing Financial Risk

USDA will provide approximately \$123 million in additional, automatic financial assistance for qualifying farm loan program borrowers who are facing financial risk, as part of the \$3.1 billion to help distressed farm loan borrowers that was provided through Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The announcement builds on financial assistance offered to borrowers through the same program in October 2022.

The IRA directed USDA to expedite assistance to distressed borrowers of direct or guaranteed loans administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) whose operations face financial risk. For example, in the October payments, farmers that were 60 days delinquent due to challenges like natural disasters, the pandemic or other unexpected situations were brought current and had their next installment paid to give them breathing room.

In October 2022, [USDA provided approximately \\$800 million](#) in initial IRA assistance to more than 11,000 **delinquent direct and guaranteed borrowers** and approximately 2,100 borrowers who had their farms liquidated and still had remaining debt. USDA shared that it would conduct case-by-case reviews of about 1,600 complex cases for potential initial relief payments, including cases of **borrowers in foreclosure or bankruptcy**. These case-by-case reviews are underway.

At the same time in October 2022, USDA announced that it anticipated payments using separate pandemic relief funding totaling roughly \$66 million on over 7,000 direct loans to borrowers who used the USDA Farm Service Agency's **disaster-set-aside** option during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of these payments have been processed and USDA anticipates it will complete all such payments in April 2023.

New Assistance for Distressed Borrowers

FSA intends to provide the new round of relief starting in April to additional distressed borrowers. This will include approximately \$123 million in automatic financial assistance for qualifying Farm Loan Program (FLP) direct loan borrowers who meet certain criteria. Similar to the automatic payments announced in October 2022, qualifying borrowers will receive an individual letter detailing the assistance as payments are made. Distressed borrowers' eligibility for these new categories of automatic payments will be determined based on their circumstances as of today. More information about the new categories that make up the \$123 million in assistance announced today and the specific amount of assistance a distressed borrower receives can be found described in this fact sheet, [IRA Section 22006: Additional Automatic Payments, Improved Procedures, and Policy Recommendations](#).

To continue to make sure producers are aware of relief potentially available to them, all producers with open FLP loans will receive a letter detailing a new opportunity to receive assistance if they took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their FLP loans, such as taking on more debt, selling property or cashing out retirement accounts. The letter will provide details on eligibility, the specific types of actions that may qualify for assistance, and the process for applying for and providing the documentation to seek that assistance.

These steps are part of a process USDA announced along with the October payments that is focused on assisting borrowers unable to make their next scheduled installment. Earlier this year, all borrowers should have received a letter detailing the process for seeking this type of assistance even before they become delinquent. Borrowers who are within two months of their next installment may seek a cashflow analysis from FSA using a recent balance sheet and operating plan to determine their eligibility.

Tax Resources

USDA will continue to work with the Department of Treasury to help borrowers understand the potential tax implications from the receipt of an IRA payment, including that options may be available to potentially avoid or alleviate any tax burden incurred as a result of receiving this financial assistance.

In early April, USDA set a specific set of revised tax documents, educational materials and resources to borrowers that received assistance in 2022, including a link to a webinar hosted by a group of farm tax experts to provide education on the options available. USDA cannot provide tax advice and encourages borrowers to consult their own tax professional, but FSA is providing educational materials for borrowers to be aware of the options. USDA has tax-related resources available at farmers.gov/taxes.

Improved Procedures and Policy Recommendations

FSA is finalizing changes to its policy handbooks to remove unnecessary hurdles, improve loan making and loan servicing and provide more flexibility on how loans are structured to maximize the opportunities for borrowers. Additional details on those changes can be found in the linked fact sheet and are the start of a broader set of process enhancements.

The fact sheet also provides information on the eight, no-cost legislative proposals included in the Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget that are designed to improve the borrower experience.

Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

The program website, 22007apply.gov, is now open. The website includes an English- and Spanish-language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at 22007apply.gov or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process will be open from July 7 to October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - 22007apply.gov, which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

On March 1, 2023, USDA shared initial [details on how the Section 22007 program will work](#), including that the Inflation Reduction Act specifies the Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for providing this assistance through qualified nongovernmental entities, under

standards set by USDA. USDA entered into agreements with vendors and cooperators in May.

In addition to the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) opening today, the Inflation Reduction Act also created several other programs that are helping USDA rebuild trust, address systemic issues and improve service to people who may have been underserved by USDA in the past. Information about USDA's equity agenda and progress is available at www.usda.gov/equity.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is **free**.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, promoting competition and 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 www.usda.gov.

FSA Now Accepting Nominations for County Committee Members

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started accepting nominations for county committee members. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA offices by August 1, 2023.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program, and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated or volunteer for candidacy for the county committee. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serving on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Producers serving on FSA county committees play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the agency. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Urban and Suburban County Committees

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. FSA established county committees specifically focused on urban agriculture. The urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the new county committees may address areas such as food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction.

Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. These members are a vital link in the effective administration of USDA programs and are responsible for carrying out programs in full accordance with the regulations, national and state policies, procedures, and instructions. Urban county committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs and serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community. Urban county committees must see that county office operations are supportive and that they receive timely and quality service by carrying out responsibilities effectively, efficiently, and impartially. Learn more at farmers.gov/urban.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election. They should check with their [local USDA Service Center](#) to see if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an FSA-669A nomination form or an FSA-669-A-3 for urban county committees. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is Currently Hiring Natural Resource Specialists

NRCS Natural Resource Specialist Applications Accepted until July 17, 2023

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado is an employer of choice. A career with the U.S. government provides employees with a comprehensive benefits package. As a federal employee, you and your family will have access to a range of benefits that are designed to make your federal career very rewarding.

The NRCS in Colorado is currently accepting applications for Natural Resource Specialist. In this position you will assist with scientific studies and investigation on the use of soils, water, vegetation, wildlife, and other natural resources as part of the land management and natural resources program.

Locations are negotiable: Applicants are encouraged to communicate/negotiate location availability during the interview stage. To apply or for more information, please visit: [USAJOBS - Job Announcement](#)

USDA Invites Input on Crop Insurance Coverage for Prevented Planting

USDA published a Request for Information, announcing public listening sessions and soliciting public comments on possible changes to prevented planting crop insurance coverage. Coinciding with the public comment period, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) will hold in-person and virtual listening sessions June through August. This includes in-person listening sessions in Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas. Meanwhile, RMA will accept written comments through its request for information until September 1.

The request for information on prevented planting requests input on prevented planting topics to include:

- Harvest Price Option – Feedback on whether to allow the prevented planting payment calculations to be based on the higher of projected price or harvest price

under the revenue protection plan of insurance.

- “1 in 4” Rule – Input on the challenges or experiences since the rule (to be eligible for a prevented planting coverage acreage must have been planted to a crop, insured, and harvested in at least 1 out of the previous 4 crop years) was implemented nationwide.
- 10 percent additional coverage option – Input on if RMA should reinstate the option to buy-up prevented planting coverage by 10 percent.
- Contract price – Whether prevented planting costs are higher for contracted crops and how prevented planting payments should be calculated for contract crops.
- General – Willingness to pay additional premium for expanded prevented planting benefits, recommendations on other prevented planting limitations, etc.

RMA will hold at least a dozen in-person sessions over the next few months. Additional details on the listening sessions are available on the [RMA website](#).

The request for information, which includes details for submitting feedback, is available in this [Federal Register notice](#).

Prevented planting insurance provisions provide valuable coverage when extreme weather conditions prevent expected plantings. Prevented planting is when a producer is unable to plant an insured crop due to an insurable cause of loss in time to grow a viable crop. Final planting dates and late planting periods are detailed in a producer's crop insurance policy, and they vary by crop and location. Prevented planting coverage is intended to assist with normal costs associated with preparing the land up to the point of seed going into the ground (pre-plant costs).

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