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## April: Colorado USDA Newsletter

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Colorado USDA Newsletter - April 2024

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

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## From Colorado FSA's State Executive Director, Kent Pepler

I am very fortunate and proud to be part of the Biden-Harris Administration. This administration supports investing billions of dollars into rural America. We in agriculture have not seen this level of commitment since the New Deal years of FDR. Colorado FSA plays a huge roll in facilitating the success of these investments. From time to time, I like to remind the wonderful employees and our producers of the important role our folks and our programs play in the economic prosperity of not only rural Colorado but all of Colorado.

FSA provides close to \$590 million worth of business a year in Colorado. The \$590 million is broken down to roughly \$500 million in Farm Programs, \$79 million for the Farm Loan Program, and \$13 million worth of salaries, rent, overhead etc.. Most of this money goes directly to our local communities and is spent up and down main streets of our towns. The general rule is, every dollar generated in rural America will be turned over close to five times in the local economy. That means our FSA programs have a massive impact on the economies in our area.

Colorado FSA employees deliver these programs at a cost to the taxpayer of about 2% of benefits, which according to my son, Tyson, the Financial Analyst, is an incredibly efficient business number that is worth mentioning.

Here we have it, Colorado FSA delivers a massive economic boost to the state. Our employees deliver the programs fairly, timely, and efficiently as possible. It is a win for our communities, it is a win for the taxpayers, and it is another step towards our overall food policy goal in this country, making sure everyone has enough to eat.

Thanks to our employees and a final message to our producers and stake holders, the next time you are in a county office, tell them thank you for doing a great job.

Good luck!

- KP

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## 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:

- **County Executive Director:**
  - [Elbert County](#), Open 03/26- 4/05
- **County Program Technician:**
  - [Akron County](#), Open 04/05-04/19
  - [Alamosa County](#), Open 03/26-04/09
  - [Cheyenne County](#), Open 03/26-04/09
  - [Baca County](#), Open 03/26-04/09
  - [Logan County](#), Open 03/26-04/09

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](mailto:claudia.drechsel@usda.gov) or 720-544-2878 if you have specific questions regarding the positions.

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## Colorado USDA Webinar Series for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

USDA is an “Every Day, Every Way” department that touches the lives of every American, every day by supporting the agriculture sector, strengthening rural communities, promoting healthy eating, and helping to protect our natural resources. At the forefront of our mission is the support we provide to farmers to help them start—and continue—farming. If you have been wondering where to start at USDA, this is the place for you.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Risk Management Agency (RMA), Rural Development (RD), and other partner organizations have come together to create a webinar series for all. The Webinar series will take place virtually every third Wednesday of the Month from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

[Register for the April Meeting here!](#)

Our Agenda for the year is as follows (subject to change):

- April 17, How to get Started with FSA and Why it's important
- May 15, RD financial assistance programs REAP Program and Value-Added Producer Grants
- June 19, Working with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) Crop & Livestock Insurance
- July 17, Technical and financial assistance to producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns (NRCS)
- August 21, Soil Health and how use Web Soil Survey
- September 18, Urban Ag
- October 16, What CSU has to offer!
- November 18, Colorado Department of Agriculture New Farmer & Rancher Resources

Previous presentations for the webinar series can be found on [Colorado FSA's Website](#) and previous recordings of the webinar series can be found on [Colorado NRCS's YouTube page](#).

For more information for beginning farmers visit: [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers | Farmers.gov](#)

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## FSA to Host In-Person Informational Meetings for Producers

The Colorado Farm Service Agency will be conducting in-person producer informational meetings around the state to cover a variety of FSA topics. The topics range from Farm Programs to Farm Loans to USDA Electronic processes, and more. Below are the dates, times, locations, topics, and registration links for each event. Please register for the event that you would like to attend; however, registration is not required to attend.

Date	Time	Location	Topic	Registration Link
Thursday, April 18, 2024	9:00am-12:00pm	Center of Craig: 601 Yampa Ave, Craig, CO 81625	Best Practices to apply for programs and General Farm Program overview	<a href="#">FSA Informational Session: Craig</a>
Tuesday, April 23, 2024	9:00am-12:00pm	Hi-Country Auction: 15062 Hwy140 Hesperus, CO 81326	Acreage Reporting and Livestock Programs	<a href="#">FSA Informational Session: Durango</a>
Tuesday, August 13, 2024	9:00am-12:00pm	Limon Community Bld: 477 D. Avenue, Limon, CO 80828	Livestock Programs, Conservation Programs, and USDA Electronic Processing for Producers	<a href="#">FSA Informational Session: Limon</a>
Wednesday, August 14, 2023	9:00am-12:00pm	FSA Office: 2150 Centre Ave. Bldg. A Ste. 116, Fort Collins, CO 80526	Farm Loans, Farm Programs, and USDA Electronic Processing for Producers	<a href="#">FSA Informational Session: Fort Collins</a>

We look forward to seeing you! For more information on programs and Colorado FSA Information, visit [Colorado State Office \(usda.gov\)](#); for more information on specific meetings, please contact the applicable [County FSA Office](#).

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## Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage Through April 29

Starting Feb. 28, dairy producers will be able to enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), an important safety net program offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences. This year's DMC signup begins Feb. 28, 2024, and ends April 29, 2024. For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may begin as soon as March 4, 2024, for any payments that triggered in January 2024.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has revised the regulations for DMC to allow eligible dairy operations to make a one-time adjustment to established production history. This adjustment will be accomplished by combining previously established supplemental production history with DMC production history for those dairy operations that participated in Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage during a prior coverage year. DMC has also been authorized through calendar year 2024. Congress passed a 2018 Farm Bill extension requiring these regulatory changes to the program.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. In 2023, Dairy Margin Coverage payments triggered in 11 months including two months, June and July, where the margin fell below the catastrophic level of \$4.00 per hundredweight, a first for Dairy Margin Coverage or its predecessor Margin Protection Program.

### 2024 DMC Coverage and Premium Fees

FSA has revised DMC regulations to extend coverage for calendar year 2024, which is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2024, and to provide an adjustment to the production history for dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of production. In previous years, smaller dairy operations could establish a supplemental production history and receive Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage. For 2024, dairy producers can establish one adjusted base

production history through DMC for each participating dairy operation to better reflect the operation's current production.

For 2024 DMC enrollment, dairy operations that established supplemental production history through Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage for coverage years 2021 through 2023, will combine the supplemental production history with established production history for one adjusted base production history.

For dairy operations enrolled in 2023 DMC under a multi-year lock-in contract, lock-in eligibility will be extended until Dec. 31, 2024. In addition, dairy operations enrolled in multi-year lock-in contracts are eligible for the discounted DMC premium rate during the 2024 coverage year. To confirm 2024 DMC lock-in coverage or opt out in favor of an annual contract for 2024, dairy operations having lock-in contracts must enroll during the 2024 DMC enrollment period.

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, minus a \$100 administrative fee. The administrative fee is waived for dairy producers who are considered limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or a military veteran. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

#### **DMC Payments**

DMC payments are calculated using updated feed and premium hay costs, making the program more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses. These updated feed calculations use 100% premium alfalfa hay.

#### **More Information**

USDA also offers other risk management tools for dairy producers, including the [Dairy Revenue Protection \(DRP\)](#) plan that protects against a decline in milk revenue (yield and price) and the [Livestock Gross Margin \(LGM\)](#) plan, which provides protection against the loss of the market value of milk minus the feed costs. Both DRP and LGM livestock insurance policies are offered through the Risk Management Agency. Producers should contact their local [crop insurance agent](#) for more information.

For more information on DMC, visit the [DMC webpage](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## **Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies, it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

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## **Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend April Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production**

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on April 10 from 2-4 p.m. Eastern.

Meeting details can be viewed in the [Federal Register Notice](#). Written comments can be submitted via [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov) by April 24 at 11:59 p.m. The Committee will deliberate and vote on proposed recommendations and address public comments during the meeting. USDA will share the agenda between 24 to 48 hours prior to the meeting on the [Committee's webpage](#).

The Committee is managed by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and was established through the 2018 Farm Bill and is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture.

[Learn more or register.](#)

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## USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that most farm loan borrowers will soon be able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) in early February. Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, especially for producers who may have limited time during the planting or harvest seasons to visit a local FSA office; modernize and improve customer service; provide additional customer self-service tools; and expand credit access to assist more producers.

On average, local USDA Service Centers process more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year. Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay their loan installment. Farm loan payments can now be made at the borrower's convenience, on their schedule and outside of FSA office hours.

Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities. This new service for producers means that farm loan employees will have more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

The Pay My Loan feature can be accessed at [farmers.gov/loans](https://farmers.gov/loans). To use the payment feature, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#). This initial release only allows individuals with loans to make online payments. For now, borrowers with jointly payable checks will need to continue to make loan payments through their local office.

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made various improvements including:

- The [Online Loan Application](#), an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.
- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), which reduced loan applications by more than half, from 29 pages to 13 pages.

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## USDA TO GATHER MONTHLY YIELD DATA TO MEASURE CROP PRODUCTION

Starting in May and continuing through November, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct the monthly Agricultural Yield Survey. The information captured in this survey will help NASS track changes in yields that can occur due to weather, pests, disease, and other factors, from farmers and ranchers in the Mountain Region for the states of Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

"This survey is critical in assessing the true state of agriculture in the Mountain Region," said Rodger Ott, Director, Mountain Regional Field Office. "The data that farm operators provide through NASS's Agricultural Yield Survey allows us to provide the necessary information that producers, agribusiness, and local, state, and federal authorities need to make sound business decisions."

Also of note, other USDA agencies rely on this data to assist in determining crop insurance and disaster aid payments as well as other program benefits.

In the survey, NASS asks participants to answer a variety of questions about how many acres of particular crops they planted, how many acres they intend to harvest, and their expected yield per acre. NASS will follow up with the same farmers in subsequent months asking them to update their expected yield per acre assessments. "By asking the same operators their expectations of yields monthly over the course of the crop year, we can

more accurately publish monthly data and capture seasonal variation," said Ott. "This approach reduces the number of questions the survey asks farm businesses while ensuring that accurate and timely data are available."

As with all NASS surveys, the results of this survey will be available in aggregate form only, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. NASS will compile, analyze, and publish survey results in the monthly Crop Production report. These and all NASS reports are available online at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/>.

For state specific questions, please contact your USDA NASS State Statistician at 1-800-392-3202:

Arizona – Dave DeWalt  
Colorado – Rodger Ott  
Montana – Eric Sommer  
New Mexico – Margie Whitcotton  
Utah – John Hilton  
Wyoming – Leslee Lohrenz

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## Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

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## RMA Offers New Resource for Specialty and Small-Scale Farmers

Finding the right risk management fit for your farm can feel overwhelming, especially for specialty crop and small-scale farmers and ranchers. That's why the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) created a [new searchable directory](#) of crop insurance agents who have experience selling [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection \(WFRP\)](#) and [Micro Farm](#) policies.

With 1,135 crop insurance agents listed, providing coverage in all 50 states, the process of finding the "right risk management fit" just got easier.

In addition to the new directory, there are other resources available for specialty crop producers including regional specialists located in each of the [RMA regional offices](#). Feedback is crucial to continually improving risk management options, and specialty crop producers can reach out with suggestions or questions by e-mailing [SpecialtyCrops@usda.gov](mailto:SpecialtyCrops@usda.gov).

Specialty crop and small-scale producers are encouraged to use the [new searchable directory](#) and visit the [RMA Specialty Crops page](#).

### Whole-Farm Revenue Protection

The first of its kind, WFRP recognizes diversification found on specialty and small-scale farms. With WFRP producers can insure their entire operation including crops, livestock, and nursery production, under one policy. Another advantage of WFRP coverage, is it bridges the insurance gap for several specialty crops that don't currently have individual policies available.

### Micro Farm

Also included in WFRP, the Micro Farm option gives smaller operations more streamlined insurance options. It provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on your farm under one insurance policy. This insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$350,000 in approved revenue, including farms with specialty or organic commodities (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity preserved, specialty, or direct markets.

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## USDA Service Center Colorado State Office

Denver Federal Center, Bld 56  
Denver, CO 80225

Phone: 720.544.2876  
Fax: 844.860.8238

### Farm Service Agency

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#### Communications Coordinator

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Elizabeth.Thomas1@usda.gov

### Natural Resource Conservation Service

#### State Conservationist

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Clint.Evans@usda.gov

#### Public Affairs Specialist

Petra Popiel  
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Petra.Popiel@usda.gov

### CONTACT US:

[Farm Service Agency](#)

[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

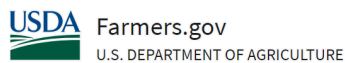
[Risk Management Agency](#)

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