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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Colorado USDA Newsletter - January 17, 2024

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

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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 through [USAJOBS](#):

Currently Open:

- ***Temporary County Program Technician:**
 - Washington County, Open until filled
 - Morgan County, Open until filled

Opening Soon:

The following announcements will be opening soon. Be on the lookout through USAJobs to apply when these open:

- ****Temporary County Program Technician:****
 - Moffat County
 - Montezuma County

- Baca County

**To apply for one of the listed temporary positions, please contact Claudia Drechsel at claudia.drechsel@usda.gov or 720-544-2878 for more information.*

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.

Disaster Assistance for 2023 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in multiple Colorado County are eligible to apply for 2023 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 31, 2024, for 2023 losses.

Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing up. For more information visit, [our LFP website](#).

Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2023 livestock losses, you must file a notice and provide the following supporting documentation to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation
- Livestock inventory documentation: Including Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock AND Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle = 2-4%, Sheep Rams/Ewes 4%, Lambs 10.7%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application for payment by March 1, 2024.

For more information, contact your [local FSA Office](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

NRCS in Colorado Announces NEW Extended 2024 ACEP Application Signup Cut-Off Date

Colorado's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces a NEW 2024 application cut-off dates for eligible Colorado entities to participate in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE).

There is one signup offered for complete and eligible applications to compete for available funding. **Application packages** for funding general, grasslands of special significance (GSS), GSS Gunnison sage grouse, GSS greater sage grouse, and general urban

agriculture projects **are NOW due on Friday, February 16, 2024, by 4:00 PM Mountain Standard Time (MST).**

[Read More](#)

For more information about ACEP-ALE, please contact Laura Trimboli at (970) 403-6379 or laura.trimboli@usda.gov or Cody Robertson at (970)880-4938 or cody.robertson@usda.gov. You can also visit your local NRCS field office located in your nearest [USDA Service Center](#).

Rural Business Development Grant Available: USDA Seeks Applications to Advance Economic Development and Create Jobs for People in Rural America

USDA Rural Development is accepting applications to advance economic development and create jobs for people in rural America through the [Rural Business Development Grant](#) program. The program supports business opportunities or business enterprise projects in rural communities. Organizations eligible to receive funding include rural towns, communities, state agencies, authorities, nonprofits, federally recognized Tribes, public colleges and non-profit cooperatives.

This program provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund distance learning networks, and help fund employment related adult education programs. To assist with business development, RBDGs may fund a broad array of activities.

RBDG is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas that have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross revenues. Programmatic activities are separated into enterprise or opportunity type grant activities.

Applications must be submitted to the nearest USDA Rural Development state office where the project is located by 4:30 p.m. ET on Feb. 28, 2024. Please reach out to RBCS Team contacts below with questions regarding application completion and submission.

For questions on projects in Colorado contact Bill Chester, william.chester@usda.gov or Robert McElroy, robert.mcelroy@usda.gov.

Farmers Can Now Enroll for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs the 2024 Crop Year

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\)](#) and [Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. Producers can enroll and make election changes for the 2024 crop year starting Dec. 18, 2023. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the *Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

2024 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 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

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 grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2022 Crop Year Payments

This fall, FSA issued payments totaling more than \$267 million to agricultural producers who enrolled in the 2022 ARC-CO option and the ARC ARC-IC option for covered commodities that triggered a payment. Payments through the PLC option did not trigger for the 2022 crop year.

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. These payments help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops. Payments for crops that may trigger for the 2023 crop year will be issued in the fall of 2024.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader USDA safety net that 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 can purchase 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.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Web-Based Decision Tools

Many universities offer web-based decision tools to help producers make informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Producers are encouraged to use the tool of their choice to support their ARC and PLC elections.

Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment [online with level 2 eAuth](#).

Apply for USDA's Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and landowners in Colorado who are interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can now apply to re-enroll, if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by Oct. 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Additionally, producers with acres enrolled in Continuous CRP set to expire Sept. 30, 2024, can now offer acres for re-enrollment. A producer can both enroll new acres into Continuous CRP and re-enroll any acres expiring Sept. 30, 2024.

FSA water quality practices, such as riparian buffers, prairie strips, grassed waterways, and wetlands, will receive an additional 20% incentive. Buffer practices have a positive impact on water quality. Additionally, the Climate-Smart Practice Incentive launched in 2021 is also available in the Continuous signup.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

For more information, visit our [Farm Loan webpage](#) or contact your local [Farm Loan office](#).

USDA Improves Crop Insurance to Better Support Conservation, Climate-Smart Practices

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating the Federal crop insurance program to affirm the use of USDA conservation practices as Good Farming Practices for crop insurance. Recently, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently updated the [Good Farming Practices Handbook](#), as part of the agency's broader efforts to support conservation and climate-smart activities as well as to improve crop insurance for agricultural producers.

The updated handbook recognizes all [conservation practices](#) offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as Good Farming Practices for crop insurance. Essentially, appropriate use of NRCS conservation practices will have no impact on crop insurance coverage, which affirms how the rules have worked on the ground for years.

Additionally, in the handbook, NRCS is recognized as an agricultural expert resource for cover crop management systems.

This updated handbook builds on similar efforts, including RMA's [designation of planting cover crops](#) as a Good Farming Practice in 2019.

Conservation and Crop Insurance

In recent years, RMA has increased its support of conservation by encouraging producers to use conservation and climate-smart practices. In November, RMA announced improvements to its [Hybrid Seed Rice coverage](#) to support producers using irrigation practices that conserve water. Also in recent years, RMA has offered premium benefits to producers to plant cover crops through the Pandemic Cover Crop Program and provided coverage for producers who [split apply nutrients](#). Learn more on RMA's [Conservation and Crop Insurance webpage](#).

More Information

Across USDA, agencies like RMA and NRCS are working to improve programs to better support the needs of producers. For example, NRCS is streamlining its Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, part of its efforts to strengthen implementation of the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The Inflation Reduction Act – part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda – provided \$19.5 billion of additional funding for NRCS conservation programs.

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