



In This Issue:

- [NRCS PIA Programs Update](#)
- [USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers](#)
- [Progression Lending from FSA](#)
- [USDA Builds Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations](#)
- [Additional Application Cutoff Dates Announced](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)

NRCS PIA Programs Update

Seasons Greetings from PIA NRCS Programs staff! We are finishing up our first quarter and gearing up for more program roll outs and open application periods in the new calendar year and the 2nd quarter of our fiscal year. Important dates for program applications and eligibility are listed below. Application cutoff date is the last day to submit an application for consideration for 2022 funding. Eligibility cutoff dates are for the applicant to provide any additional documentation requested and/or required by NRCS or FSA to establish an applicant as eligible for programs.

A new option for the EQIP program participants is EQIP-CIC (Environmental Quality Incentive Program-Conservation Incentive Contracts). It combines the best of both our Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and EQIP program by allowing for 5 years of annual payments on acres enrolled as well as offering financial assistance on installation of supporting practices typically installed under EQIP. Unlike CSP, not all acres under the applicants control need to be enrolled or assessed for eligibility.

In addition to the announcement of a second signup for EQIP-CIC, ACEP-ALE will have a second signup date. Please see the dates below for our 2nd Quarter Important Program Dates:

Program	Application Cutoff Date	Eligibility Cutoff Date
ACEP-ALE Rd 2	March 31, 2022	April 30, 2022
CSP	February 25, 2022	March 25, 2022
EQIP Rd 2 CIC	February 14, 2022	March 14, 2022
RCPP-EQIP (Tentative)	February 14, 2022	March 14, 2022

Please contact us for further information.

Thank you very much from the Programs Staff,

[Jill Ficke-Beaton](#), Acting Assistant Director of Programs,
[Jocelyn Bamba](#), Acting EQIP Program Manager
[Mandy Chen](#), Acting CSP/ACEP Program Manager



USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new program to assist hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale during the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications Dec. 15, 2021 through Feb. 25, 2022.

SMHPP provides assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020. Negotiated sale, or negotiated formula sale, means a sale of hogs by a producer to a packer under which the base price for the hogs is determined by seller-buyer interaction and agreement on a delivery day. USDA is offering SMHPP as packer production was reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic due to employee illness and supply chain issues, resulting in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices.

The Department has set aside up to \$50 million in pandemic assistance funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for SMHPP.

SMHPP Program Details

Eligible hogs include hogs sold through a negotiated sale by producers between April 16, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020. To be eligible, the producer must be a person or legal entity who has ownership in the hogs and whose production facilities are located in the United States, including U.S. territories. Contract producers, federal, state and local governments, including public schools and packers are not eligible for SMHPP.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. FSA will issue payments to eligible hog producers as applications are received and approved.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP starting Dec. 15, 2021, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/smhpp for a copy of the Notice of Funds Availability, information on applicant eligibility and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Progression Lending from FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans are considered progression lending. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Our goal is to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. FSA staff will advise borrowers on developing strategies and a plan to meet your goals and graduate to commercial credit. FSA borrowers are responsible for the success of their farming operation, but FSA staff will help in an advisory role, providing the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Builds Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses to agricultural producers who are certified organic or transitioning to organic. USDA will

make \$20 million available through the new [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program \(OTECP\)](#) as part of USDA's broader [Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative](#), which provides new, broader and more equitable opportunities for farmers, ranchers and producers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, certified organic and transitional operations faced challenges due to loss of markets, and increased costs and labor shortages, in addition to costs related to obtaining or renewing their organic certification, which producers and handlers of conventionally grown commodities do not incur. Transitional operations also faced the financial challenge of implementing practices required to obtain organic certification without being able to obtain the premium prices normally received for certified organic commodities.

Eligible Expenses

OTECP funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Certified operations and transitional operations may apply for OTECP for eligible expenses paid during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. For each year, OTECP covers 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category (crop, livestock, wild crop, handling and State Organic Program fee). This includes application fees, inspection fees, USDA organic certification costs, state organic program fees and more.

Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. This includes fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan.

For both certified operations and transitional operations, OTECP covers 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the expense of soil testing required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

Applying for Assistance

Signup for 2020 and 2021 OTECP will be Nov. 8, 2021, through Jan. 7, 2022. Producers apply through their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office and can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364. Visit farmers.gov/otecp to learn more.

Additional Organic Support

OTECP builds upon USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) which provides cost share assistance of 50%, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope, to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the NOP. This year's application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021.

Additionally, USDA's Risk Management Agency announced improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Program including increasing expansion limits for organic producers to the higher of \$500,000 or 35%. Previously, small and medium size organic operations were held to the same 35% limit to expansion as conventional practice producers. Also, producers can now report acreage as certified organic, or as acreage in transition to organic, when the producer has requested an organic certification by the acreage reporting date.

To learn more about USDA's assistance for organic producers, visit usda.gov/organic.

As USDA looks for long-term solutions to build back a better food system, the Department is committed to delivery of financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers and businesses who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Since USDA rolled out the Pandemic Assistance for

Producers initiative in March, the Department has provided support to America's farmers and ranchers including:

- \$18 billion in [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#) payments, including a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers since the program reopened in April 2021.
- Over \$35 million in assistance for those who had to depopulate livestock and poultry due to insufficient processing access ([Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program](#)).
- Over \$7 million to date for the logging and log hauling industry ([Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers](#)). Final payments are being calculated to be disbursed soon.
- \$1 billion to [purchase healthy food for food insecure Americans and build food bank capacity](#).
- \$350 million in [additional dairy assistance related to market volatility](#).
- [\\$500 million deployed through existing USDA programs](#).

For more details, please visit www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance.

Additional Application Cutoff Dates Announced

NRCS Pacific Islands Area will be accepting applications for a second round of ACEP-ALE and EQIP-CIC, and for CSP and RCPP-EQIP.

[Read more](#) for application cutoff dates to submit an application for consideration for 2022 funding.

Dates to Remember

December 31, 2021 - Deadline to sign up for Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program for fruit, grass, honey and vegetable crops. Click here for more information: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistanceprogram/noninsured-crop-disaster-assistance/index>

January 7, 2022 - Deadline to sign up for the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program <https://www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance/otecp>

January 30, 2022 - Deadline to sign up for 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program



USDA website: <https://www.usda.gov/>
Farmer.gov website: <https://www.farmers.gov/>

Hawaii and Pacific Basin FSA State Office
USDA Farm Service Agency

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pacific Islands Area

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