

In This Issue:

- [From the State Executive Director](#)
 - [USDA to Measure Financial Well-Being of Iowa Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - [Deadline Extended to Apply for Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations](#)
 - [Disaster Set-Aside Extension](#)
 - [RMA offers Post- Application Coverage Endorsement \(PACE\)](#)
 - [Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage](#)
 - [USDA Invests \\$2 Million in Risk Management Education for Historically Underserved and Small-Scale Producers](#)
 - [Waiver of DCIA Compliance for Commodity and Farm Storage Facility Loan Programs](#)
 - [USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online](#)
-

From the State Executive Director

In these short and often cold days of winter, we have much to celebrate as Iowa farmers. The days are getting longer. Snow fall provides some much needed moisture. Spring is coming. But there are still some challenging days of winter before the final thaw opens another growing season.

Similarly, thanks to vaccines and the efforts of individuals and communities, we are turning a corner on the global pandemic. But COVID continues to present big challenges for our state, our country, and our world. Our hearts in the FSA family go out to all those who have experienced loss in the past two years. As we experience a new surge with the omicron variant, you may have noticed that many of our county offices are again restricted to no visitors. However, our offices are not closed while we experience this current spike in cases and Iowans work together to help keep our hospitals and health care providers from being overwhelmed.

In the coming weeks, we ask you to call your county offices to receive the service our local leaders are still delivering. Farmers are currently enrolling in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. Sign up ends on March 15. We need your help in getting enrollment completed and your election changes made. There are a number of ways for you to do this. We can use traditional mail to get you the paperwork to sign and return. We can use email, and you can sign electronically. You can also work with your county office to sign in person without entering the office. Mail and email options are available even if your county office has no staffing and visitor restrictions.

In addition to ARC/PLC, we have disaster programs, conservation programs, loans, and other programs coming to help Iowa farming families succeed in growing the products and providing the services our world needs. Together, we're going to get through this pandemic. We're using important tools that are making a difference in keeping our staff healthy and delivering important programs for Iowa farmers and rural communities. Remember, even the harshest Iowa winters always break for the hopefulness of spring.

Matt Russell
State Executive Director
Iowa Farm Service Agency

USDA to Measure Financial Well-Being of Iowa Farmers and Ranchers

Beginning in January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will spend several months gathering information about farm economics and production practices from farmers and ranchers across Iowa on the 2021 Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS). The results of this survey will help inform decisions on local, state and federal policies and programs that affect Iowa farms and farm families.

To obtain the most accurate data, NASS will reach out to 1,900 producers across the state between January and April. The survey asks producers to provide in-depth information about their operating revenues, production costs, and household characteristics. The 2021 ARMS includes a version of the questionnaire focused on farm costs and returns for dairy and corn enterprises. And, this year's survey also includes questions to help measure any impacts of COVID-19 on farms, farm and household finances, and off-farm employment.

Selected producers can respond online at agcounts.usda.gov or fill out the paper questionnaire they received and return it in the prepaid envelope provided. In February, NASS interviewers will begin reaching out by phone to those farmers who have not yet responded to help them with the questionnaire and ensure they have a voice in providing facts used to evaluate issues related to agriculture and the rural economy rather than relying on perceptions, opinions, or anecdotes.

In addition to producing accurate information, NASS has strong safeguards in place to protect the confidentiality of all farmers who respond to its surveys. The agency will only publish data in an aggregate form, ensuring the confidentiality of all responses and that no individual respondent or operation can be identified.

For a more detailed explanation of ARMS and to access information published from past years, visit nass.usda.gov/go/arms or call the NASS Upper Midwest Regional Office at 1-800-772-0825.

Deadline Extended to Apply for Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended the deadline for agricultural producers who are certified organic, or transitioning to organic, to apply for the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP). This program provides pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses. The deadline to apply for 2020 and 2021 eligible expenses is now Feb. 4, 2022, rather than the original deadline of Jan. 7, 2022.

Signup for OTECP, administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), began Nov. 8.

Certified operations and transitional operations may apply for OTECP for eligible expenses paid during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. Signup for the 2022 fiscal year will be announced at a later date.

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.

Producers apply through their local FSA office and can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364. The program application and additional information can be found at farmers.gov/otecp.

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. Although the application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021, FSA will consider late-filed applications for those operations who still wish to apply.

Meanwhile, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently [made improvements to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) to make it more flexible and accessible to organic producers.

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

Disaster Set-Aside Extension

USDA has additional support available to producers given the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 variants and has extended the availability of COVID-19 Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) for installments due through Jan. 31, 2022. In addition, FSA will permit a second DSA for COVID-19 and a second DSA for natural disasters for those who had an initial COVID-19 DSA. Requests for a COVID-19 DSA or a second DSA must be received no later than May 1, 2022.

Last year, FSA broadened the use of the DSA. Normally used in the wake of natural disasters, the DSA can now allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19 and determined to be eligible, to have their next payment set aside. The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This will improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

More Information

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#). Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

RMA offers Post- Application Coverage Endorsement (PACE)

Corn farmers who "split-apply" nitrogen now have another option for insurance coverage. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) announced the details of its Post Application Coverage Endorsement (PACE) in certain states for non-irrigated corn, providing coverage for producers who use this practice that saves producers money and is considered better for natural resources.

To "split-apply" nitrogen, growers make multiple fertilizer applications during the growing season rather than providing all the crop's nitrogen requirements with a single treatment before or during planting. This practice can lead to lower input costs and helps prevent runoff and leaching of nutrients into waterways and groundwater. PACE provides payments for the projected yield lost when producers are unable to apply the post nitrogen application during the V3-V10 corn growth stages due to field conditions created by weather.

PACE is available to producers in Allamakee, Audubon, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Calhoun, Carroll, Cedar, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Clinton, Crawford, Dallas, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Grundy, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Harrison, Howard, Humboldt, Ida, Iowa, Jackson, Jasper, Johnson, Jones, Kossuth, Linn, Marshall, Mitchell, Monona, Muscatine, Polk, Poweshiek, Sac, Scott, Shelby, Story, Tama, Webster, Winnebago, Winneshiek, Woodbury, Worth, and Wright counties.

It is available as supplemental coverage for Yield Protection (YP), Revenue Protection (RP), and Revenue Protection with Harvest Price Exclusion (RP-HPE) policies. The first sales closing date to purchase insurance is March 15, 2022.

To learn more about PACE, visit the [RMA's Conservation webpage](#), which has frequently asked questions, a fact sheet and other resources.

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.

Applying for NAP Payments

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 local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA Invests \$2 Million in Risk Management Education for Historically Underserved and Small-Scale Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$2 million in cooperative agreements this year for risk management education and training programs that support historically underserved producers, small-scale farmers, and conservation practices. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is investing in organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, universities, and county cooperative extension offices, to develop training and education tools to help producers learn how to effectively manage long-term risks and challenges.

RMA works with partners to assist producers, especially historically underserved, farmers and ranchers, in effectively managing long-term risks and challenges. RMA re-established its support of risk management education in 2021, investing nearly \$1 million in nine risk management education projects. From 2002 to 2018, RMA provided annual funding for risk management education projects, supporting more than \$126 million worth of projects in historically underserved communities.

How Organizations Can Apply

A broad range of risk management training activities are eligible for funding consideration, including training on Federal crop insurance options, record keeping, financial management, non-insurance-based risk management tools, and natural disaster preparedness among others. Partners can also train farmers at all levels on risk management options that help secure local food systems.

This selection process is competitive, and RMA will prioritize projects focused on underserved, organic, and specialty crop producers. Additionally, organizations providing training related to climate change, wildfire response, local foods, and urban ag will also be given stronger consideration.

Interested organizations must apply by 5:59 pm Eastern Time on March 11 through the Results Verification System at rvs.umn.edu.

Waiver of DCIA Compliance for Commodity and Farm Storage Facility Loan Programs

On January 27, 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration suspended all debt collections, foreclosures, and other adverse actions for borrowers of direct farm loans and Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) because of the national public health emergency caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

It has been determined that the January 2021 suspension included a waiver of the Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) noncompliance for issuing new Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL), Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) or FSFL to borrowers who are in delinquent status with FSFL or farm loans.

Under normal circumstances, DCIA specifies that a person cannot obtain Federal financial assistance in the form of loans (other than disaster loans), loan insurance, or guarantees if that person has delinquent Federal non-tax debt. MAL, LDP, and FSFL programs administered by FSA are currently subject to these statutory constraints.

FSA county offices will review MALs, LDPs, and FSFLs that were previously denied on or after January 27, 2021, because of DCIA noncompliance. Offices will notify applicants of the waiver provisions and the opportunity to obtain a loan. All applicable eligibility requirements remain in place with the exception of DCIA waiver.

Reach out to your local FSA office for more information. To find your local office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA's Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete

business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer's personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit farmers.gov/mydocs to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

To learn more about program flexibilities and Service Center status during the coronavirus pandemic, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Iowa Farm Service Agency

10500 Buena Vista Court
Des Moines, IA 50322

Phone: 515-254-1540

Matt Russell, Executive Director