



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Montana Newsletter - January 2023

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## Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines

USDA in Montana reminds agricultural producers of important Farm Service Agency (FSA) program dates. Contact your local service center to apply and with any questions. Visit online at [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) and [fsa.usda.gov/mt](https://fsa.usda.gov/mt).

**Jan. 2, 2023:** Honey covered under NAP **must** accurately be reported to FSA by January 2 for the total number of colonies present in all counties. *Please note that producers must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of any changes in the total number of colonies and additional counties to which bees are moved.*

**Jan. 16, 2023:** 2023 acreage reporting deadline for established stand alfalfa seed, fall alfalfa seed, and cherries. *Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2022 reports for these crops.*

**Jan. 30, 2023:** Deadline to request all Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP) assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

**Jan. 30, 2023:** Deadline to request Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

**Jan. 31, 2023:** Deadline to enroll in Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage (SDMC) for program year 2023.

**Jan. 31, 2023:** Deadline to apply for 2022 Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC)

**Jan. 31, 2023:** Crop year 2022 Final Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL)/Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) Availability Date for Peanuts, Wool, Mohair and LDP only for Unshorn Pelts.

**March 1, 2023:** Deadline to request Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) benefits for 2022 calendar year losses.

**March 15, 2023:** Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage closing date for all spring crops **except** spring-seeded canola, rye, speltz, triticale, wheat, mixed forage, perennial and value-loss crops. *Please note that the acreage reporting date for your NAP covered crops is the earlier of the established FSA acreage reporting date for the crop or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported.*

**March 15, 2023:** Deadline to elect coverage and enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2023 crop year.

**March 31, 2023:** Crop year 2022 Final Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL)/Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) Availability Date for Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, Seed Cotton, Sesame seed and Wheat.

**May 31, 2023:** Crop year 2022 Final Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL)/Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) Availability Date for Corn, Cotton (bales), Dry peas, Grain sorghum, Lentils, Mustard Seed, Long grain rice, Medium Grain Rice, Safflower, Small chickpeas, Large Chickpeas, Cotton, Soybeans and Sunflower seed.

**July 17, 2023:** 2023 acreage reporting deadline for spring seeded alfalfa seed, forage seeding, CRP, perennial forage not covered under NAP and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date.

**Sept. 1, 2023:** NAP application closing date for fall and spring seeded Canola and all Value Loss Crops.

**Sept. 30, 2023:** NAP application closing date for all perennial forage, fall and spring seeded garlic, rye, speltz, triticale, wheat, and mixed forage crops. *Please note that the acreage reporting date for your NAP covered crops is the earlier of the established FSA acreage reporting date for the crop or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported.*

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when loss is apparent for **livestock and farm-raised fish** losses.

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **15 days** of when loss is apparent for **honeybee** losses.

LIP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when the loss is apparent.

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## 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 2022 livestock losses, you must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. You then must 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

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 (less than 250 pounds) = 5%. 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, 2023.

For more information, contact your [Local County USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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# Disaster Assistance for 2022 Livestock Forage Losses in 44 Montana Counties

## 44 MT Counties Triggered; U.S Drought Monitor Updated Weekly

Livestock producers in **44 Montana counties** are eligible to apply for 2022 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass, and forage sorghum.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or 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.

The following 44 Montana counties have triggered the 2022 LFP drought criteria: **Beaverhead, Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Fergus, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, McCone, Madison, Meagher, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powder River, Powell, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Valley, Wheatland, and Wibaux.** Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2023, for 2022 losses.

Producers in these counties are also eligible to apply for benefits under the 2022 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) for losses relating to feed transportation, livestock transportation and water transportation costs. The deadline to file a Notice of Loss for livestock losses under ELAP is 30 days after the date that the loss is apparent. Applications for payment must be completed no later than January 30, 2023, for 2022 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the local USDA Service Center and visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) or [fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://fsa.usda.gov/mt).

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## Farmers Can Make 2023 Crop Year Elections, Enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs

Agricultural producers can now change election and enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage](#) programs for the 2023 crop year, two key safety net programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Producers have until March 15, 2023, to enroll in these two programs. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started issuing payments totaling more than \$255 million to producers with 2021 crops that have triggered payments through ARC or PLC.

### 2023 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 2023 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed

contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2023, they must sign a new contract.

If producers do not submit their election by the March 15, 2023 deadline, their election remains the same as their 2022 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

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

### **Web-Based Decision Tools**

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to obtain basic information regarding the decision and factors that should be taken into consideration such as future commodity prices and historic yields to estimate payments for 2022.

### **2021 Payments and Contracts**

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. This month, FSA processed payments to producers enrolled in 2021 ARC-CO, ARC-IC and PLC for covered commodities that triggered for the crop year.

For ARC-CO, producers can view the [2021](#) ARC-CO Benchmark Yields and Revenues online database, for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For PLC, payments have triggered for rapeseed and peanuts.

For ARC-IC, producers should contact their local FSA office for additional information pertaining to 2021 payment information, which relies on producer-specific yields for the crop and farm to determine benchmark yields and actual year yields when calculating revenues.

### **By the Numbers**

In 2021, producers signed nearly 1.8 million ARC or PLC contracts, and 251 million out of 273 million base acres were enrolled in the programs. For the 2022 crop year signed contracts surpassed 1.8 million, to be paid in the fall of 2023, if a payment triggers.

Since ARC and PLC were first authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, these safety-net programs have paid out more than \$34.9 billion to producers of covered commodities.

### **Crop Insurance Considerations**

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which 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 have the option of purchasing 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.

### **More Information**

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

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## **USDA Names Appointees to the Montana Farm Service Agency State Committee**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced appointees who will serve on the Montana USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) state committee.

Members of the FSA state committee are appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and are responsible for the oversight of farm programs and county committee operations, resolving program delivery appeals from the agriculture community, maintaining cooperative relations with industry stakeholders, keeping producers informed about FSA programs and operating in a manner consistent with USDA equal opportunity and civil rights policies.

Each FSA state committee is comprised of three to five members including a designated chairperson. The individuals appointed to serve on this committee for Montana are:

- Committee Chair Ryan Lankford – Chinook
- Casey Bailey – Fort Benton
- Steve Carney - Scobey
- Sarah Degn – Sidney
- Jake Merkel - Whitehall

For the full news release click [here](#).

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## **Montana's Next Generation Conference returns to Shelby, MT, Jan. 28, 2023**

The 2023 Montana's Next Generation Conference is back and in-person on Saturday, January 28 at the Shelby High School in Shelby, MT. The conference will provide 36 workshops to choose from including recordkeeping, market outlooks, marketing, crop and livestock production, succession planning and business topics.

Each hour, participants will be able to choose from six different workshops to attend. Topics will include workshops designed for beginning producers as well as advanced knowledge for continuing education. Pesticide points have been applied for and will be posted if approved prior to the conference.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers can complete their borrower training requirements by attending six workshops and completing an evaluation at the end.

For a full list of all the conference topics, agenda and registration, check it out online at [www.mtnextgen.com](http://www.mtnextgen.com) or paper registration forms are available from your local extension office. Early registration discounts are available through Monday, Jan. 16, and the final registration deadline is Jan. 23. Best Western has a block of rooms reserved for \$99.99/night and Comfort Inn has rooms at \$89/night for a single room and \$94/night for a double. Please mention "Montana's Next Generation Conference" for the discounted rate.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this event should contact Lacy Roberts at (406) 873-5618, ext. 2 or Federal Relay Service at 1 (800) 877-8339 by Jan. 17, 2023.

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## **USDA Releases Nationwide Farmer, Rancher and Forest Manager Prospective Customer Survey**

You can now take a nationwide survey to help the USDA improve and increase access to its programs and services for America's farmers, ranchers, and forest managers. The survey includes new and existing customers. USDA encourages all agricultural producers to take the survey, especially those who have not worked with USDA previously. The survey gathers feedback on programs and services available through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The survey is available online at [farmers.gov/survey](https://farmers.gov/survey), and you should complete it by March 31, 2023. Stakeholder organizations are also encouraged to share the survey link through their networks. The survey is available in 14 different languages including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hmong, Korean, Navajo, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese.

In addition to the online survey, the FPAC Business Center, which is administering the survey, will also mail 11,000 printed surveys to various local state stakeholder organizations and farmers markets.

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## **The 2022 Census of Agriculture is Underway**

America's farmers and ranchers now have the opportunity to be represented in the nation's only comprehensive and impartial agriculture data for every state, county and territory. USDA has mailed the 2022 Census of Agriculture to all known agriculture producers across the nation and Puerto Rico. Producers have the option to respond

securely and conveniently online at [agaccounts.usda.gov](https://agaccounts.usda.gov) or by mail. The deadline for response is Feb. 6, 2023.

Collected in service to American agriculture since 1840 and now conducted every five years by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census of Agriculture tells the story and shows the value of U.S. agriculture. The data inform decisions about business, programs, rural development, research, and more. These are things that directly impact producers, and better data can lead to better decisions. That is why it is so important for every producer's voice to be counted.

Responding to the Census of Agriculture is required by law under Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113. The same law requires NASS to keep personally-identifiable information confidential, to use the data only for statistical purposes, and only publish in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation. NASS will release the results of the ag census in 2024.

To learn more about the Census of Agriculture, visit [nass.usda.gov/AqCensus](https://nass.usda.gov/AqCensus) or call 800-727-9540. On the website, producers and other data users can access past ag census data, [partner tools](#) to help spread the word about the upcoming ag census, special study information, and more. For highlights of these and the latest information on the upcoming Census of Agriculture, follow USDA NASS on twitter [@usda\\_nass](https://twitter.com/usda_nass).

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## Farm Service Agency Announces County Committee Election Results

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that County Committee elections are over, and the ballots have been counted.

To find out the election results in your area, please contact your local FSA office.

County committee members are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA. They help deliver programs at the county level and work to serve the needs of local producers. All recently elected county committee members will take office in January 2023 and will be joining the existing committee. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee, and they are made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

Nearly 7,800 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members impact the administration of FSA within a community by applying their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

County committee members impact producers through their decision making and help shape the culture of a local FSA office. They also ensure the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties and are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. Members conduct hearings and reviews as requested by the state committee, ensure underserved farmers, ranchers and foresters are fairly represented, make recommendations to the state committee on existing programs, monitor changes in farm programs and inform farmers of the purpose and provisions of

FSA programs. They also assist with outreach and inform underserved producers such as beginning farmers, ranchers and foresters, about FSA opportunities.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) or contact your local FSA office.

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## RMA Offers Virtual and In-Person “Roadshow” Workshops About Improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Insurance Options

USDA is offering workshops with virtual and in-person options on Jan. 10, Jan. 24 and Feb. 25 for agricultural producers and stakeholders to learn about the latest updates and improvements to the [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) (WFRP) and the [Micro Farm](#) insurance options. WFRP and Micro Farm are two of the most comprehensive risk management options available. These insurance options are especially important to specialty crop, organic, urban and direct market producers. Both programs serve as safety nets for all commodities on a farm under one policy and are available in all counties nationwide. The roadshow workshops are part of RMA’s broader efforts to increase participation in crop insurance and educate producers about policy improvements.

Improvements include:

- Doubling the maximum insurable revenue under WFRP, now up to \$17 million
- More than tripling the size of farm operations eligible for Micro Farm to \$350,000 in approved revenue
- Reducing paperwork requirements for WFRP

### In-person Roadshow Workshops:

- **January 24, 2023, 9:00 a.m. CT for Insurance agents and 1:00 p.m. for farmers and ranchers**  
In-person and virtual event - Davenport, Iowa  
[Link for Agents/AIPs: Join Crop Insurance Update: WFRP Road Show Event for Agents/AIPs](#)  
[Link for Producers/Growers: Join Crop Insurance Update: WFRP Road Show Event for Growers](#)  
Address: 6000 Eastern Avenue  
Hosted by: Iowa Organic Association and the USDA RMA St. Paul Regional Office
- **February 25, 2023**  
In-person event: at the Michigan Family Farms Conference  
Conference information: [www.miffs.org/mffc2023](https://www.miffs.org/mffc2023)  
Address: Kalamazoo Valley Community College (Texas Township Campus), 6767 W O Avenue  
Hosted by: RMA Springfield Regional Office

More information is available on the [RMA Roadshow webpage](#).

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# Registration is Open for the 2023 Montana Soil Health Symposium

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will be hosting the 2023 Montana Soil Health Symposium on Feb. 8-9 at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center.

The event will feature Jerry Doan of Black Leg Ranch in McKenzie, ND, Brendon Rockey of Rockey Farms in Center, CO, and John Kempf of Advancing Eco Agriculture and KindHarvest.ag in OH. Plus, a pre-conference workshop on Feb. 7 featuring four ranchers across Montana sharing their challenges and opportunities as they have worked to market their beef to consumers in different ways.

The Soil Health Symposium provides an opportunity for farmers, ranchers, gardeners, and technical specialists from all different landscapes, generations, and levels of experience to network and share their stories, successes, and lessons learned in the pursuit of soil management. Topics will range from human health and nutrition and how to work with partners and bankers in implementing regenerative practices to managing nutrition and microbe integrity for pest resistance and high yields and grass roots organizations accomplishing great things for resources and their communities. Jay Fuhrer, long-time conservationist, will take it back to the basics with Soil Health 101. In addition to the keynote speakers, you will hear from more than a dozen Montana agricultural producers using the soil health principles in their cropping, ranching, and gardening systems.

The pre-conference workshop will explore creative ways to get your products to customers, including livestock processing, regulations with state and USDA processing facilities, restaurants, marketing strategies, and other options. This registration is separate from the symposium and space is limited.

Early bird registration for the symposium ends Jan. 16, 2023, so register soon! Special pricing is also available for students and interns enrolled in educational agriculture programs.

Learn more, get the agenda, and register at [mtsoilhealth.org](https://mtsoilhealth.org).

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## USDA Previews Crop and Revenue Loss Assistance for Agricultural Producers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced plans for additional emergency relief and pandemic assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA is preparing to roll out the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\)](#) Phase Two as well as the new [Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program \(PARP\)](#), which are two programs to help offset crop and revenue losses for producers. USDA is sharing early information to help producers gather documents and train front-line staff on the new approach.

ERP Phase Two will assist eligible agricultural producers who suffered eligible crop losses, measured through decreases in revenue, due to wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture and qualifying droughts occurring in calendar years 2020 and 2021.

PARP will assist eligible producers of agricultural commodities who experienced revenue decreases in calendar year 2020 compared to 2018 or 2019 due to the COVID-19

pandemic. PARP will help address gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses.

### **Emergency Relief Program Phase Two**

ERP is authorized under the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which includes \$10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

Phase Two builds on ERP Phase One, which was [rolled out in May 2022](#) and has since paid more than \$7.1 billion to producers who incurred eligible crop losses that were covered by federal crop insurance or Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

ERP Phase Two includes producers who suffered eligible losses but may not have received program benefits in Phase One. To be eligible for Phase Two, producers must have suffered a loss in allowable gross revenue as defined in forthcoming program regulations in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event.

Eligible crops include both traditional insurable commodities and specialty crops that are produced in the United States as part of a farming operation and are intended to be commercially marketed. Like other emergency relief and pandemic assistance programs, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) continues to look for ways to simplify the process for both staff and producers while reducing the paperwork burden. The design of ERP Phase Two is part of that effort.

In general, ERP Phase Two payments are expected to be based on the difference in certain farm revenue between a typical year of revenue as will be specified in program regulations for the producer and the disaster year. ERP Phase Two assistance is targeted to the remaining needs of producers impacted by qualifying natural disaster events, while avoiding windfalls or duplicative payments. Details will be available when the rule is published later this year.

### **Deadline for Emergency Relief Program Phase One**

Producers who are eligible for assistance through ERP Phase One have until Friday, Dec. 16, 2022, to contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) to receive program benefits. Going forward, if any additional ERP Phase One pre-filled applications are generated due to corrections or other circumstances, there will be a 30-day deadline from the date of notification for that particular application.

### **Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program**

PARP is authorized and funded by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

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 certain threshold decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to 2018 or 2019. Exact details on the calculations and eligibility will be available when the forthcoming rule is published.

### **How Producers Can Prepare**

ERP Phase Two and PARP will use revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. FSA encourages producers to have their tax documents from the past few years and supporting materials ready, as explained further below. Producers will need similar documentation to what was needed for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Phase Two, where a producer could use 2018 or 2019 as the benchmark year relative to the disaster year.

In the coming weeks, USDA will provide additional information on how to apply for assistance through ERP Phase Two and PARP. In the meantime, producers are encouraged to begin gathering supporting documentation including:

- Schedule F (Form 1040); and
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 for ERP and for calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020 for PARP.

Producers should also have, or be prepared to have, the following forms on file for both ERP and PARP program participation:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet* (as applicable to the program participant);
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity;
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable); and
- Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm should contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

In addition to the forms listed above, underserved producers are encouraged to register their status with FSA, using Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, as certain existing permanent and ad-hoc disaster programs provide increased benefits or reduced fees and premiums.

Through proactive communications and outreach, USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program eligibility, application and implementation details unfold.

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## 2023 Montana Leopold Conservation Award Seeks Applicants

Know a Montana rancher, farmer or forestland owner who goes above and beyond in the stewardship and management of natural resources? Nominate them for the 2023 Montana Leopold Conservation Award@.

Nominations may be submitted on behalf of a landowner, or landowners may nominate themselves. The application can be found at [www.sandcountyfoundation.org/ApplyLCA](http://www.sandcountyfoundation.org/ApplyLCA).

The [application](#) deadline is **March 15, 2023**. Applications can be emailed to [sbarta@mt.gov](mailto:sbarta@mt.gov) or postmarked by March 15, 2023, and mailed to:

Leopold Conservation Award  
c/o Rangeland Resources Program Coordinator  
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
P.O. Box 414  
Clyde Park, MT 59018

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## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans). Find local contacts at [farmers.gov/contact](https://farmers.gov/contact).

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## Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center and/or visit [online](#).

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## New Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers

A new multi-agency [guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available](#). If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you. This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency. The [guide](#) is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on [farmers.gov/translations](https://farmers.gov/translations).

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## Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information

It is important to promptly report any changes in your farming operation to FSA. These changes can include, but are not limited to, changes in your address, phone, or email, name changes, changes to entity membership or shares, formation or dissolution of any entity (such as a trust, partnership, LLC, LLP or corporation) that owns or operates land or owns other farming assets used in your operation, sale or purchase of land, adding or dropping leases, and any changes to financing or equipment. Participants in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to their local FSA office in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan with necessary changes, as applicable. Failure to timely notify your local FSA office may result in ineligibility for program benefits, or delays in issuance of program payments. If you have any updates or corrections to your records, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

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## FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, [contact your local Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## FSA's Emergency Loan Program

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

- [Montana Disaster Designation Information](#)
- [Emergency Farm Loans](#)
- [Farm Loan Programs](#)

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### Montana

USDA Farm Service Agency  
PO Box 670  
Bozeman, MT 59771

Phone: 406.587.6872

Fax: 855.546.0264

Web: [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt)

State Executive Director:  
MAUREEN WICKS

State Committee:  
RYAN LANKFORD  
CASEY BAILEY  
STEVE CARNEY  
SARAH DEGN  
JAKE MERKEL

**FSA Policy Reminders:** [2021 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
10 East Babcock Street, Room 443  
Bozeman, MT 59715-4704  
Phone: 406-587-6811  
Fax: 855-510-7028  
Web: [nrcs.usda.gov/montana](http://nrcs.usda.gov/montana)

State Conservationist:  
TOM WATSON

USDA Risk Management Agency  
Billings Regional Office  
3490 Gabel Road, Suite 100  
Billings, MT 59102-7302  
Phone: 406-657-6447  
Fax: 406-657-6573  
Email: [rsomt@rma.usda.gov](mailto:rsomt@rma.usda.gov)  
Web: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

Regional Director:  
ERIC BASHORE

**Contact information for your local office, visit: [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).**

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).