



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Montana Newsletter - November 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).

**Nov. 1:** Last day of 2023 CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Grazing Period (prior approval required)

**Early November:** 2023 County Committee Election Ballots to be Mailed to Voters

**Nov 15:** 2023 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Apiculture, Fall Wheat (Hard Red Winter), and all other Fall Seeded Small Grains. Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2022 reports for these crops.

**Dec. 4:** Voted FSA County Committee Election Ballots to be returned to the FSA County Office or post-marked.

**Dec. 31:** 2023 NAP Application for Coverage Deadline for Honey

**Jan. 13, 2024:** Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Producers Who Experienced Discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs application period closes. Applications are due January 13, 2024. To ensure timely processing, there will be no extensions to the deadline. [Read more here.](#)

**Jan. 30, 2024:** Application deadline for 2023 LFP. Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2024, for 2023 losses.

**Jan. 30, 2024:** Deadline to file a notice of loss and application for payment for ELAP. The 30-calendar-day (livestock and farm-raised fish) and 15-calendar-day (honeybees) timeframes to submit a notice of loss from the date the loss is apparent for the 2023 and subsequent program years, has been waived. The new deadline for filing a notice of loss under ELAP will be the same as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 30 calendar days following the program year of which the loss occurred.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** Deadline to file a notice of loss and application for payment for LIP. The 30-calendar-day timeframe to submit a notice of loss from the date the loss is apparent for the 2023 and subsequent program years has been waived. The new deadline for filing a notice of loss under LIP will be the same as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 60 calendar days after the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

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## From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks

With Thanksgiving being around the corner, I am reminded of all the things for which I am grateful and thankful.

I am grateful for my family and the time we spend together. I am thankful for our staff at FSA and their hard work to serve our farmers and ranchers. I am equally grateful and thankful for all the hard work of our producers.

I hope that you find peace this holiday season and get to spend it with loved ones. We are forever grateful for you and the work you continue to do.

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## Disaster Assistance for 2023 Livestock Forage Losses in 21 Montana counties

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

Livestock producers in **21 Montana counties** are eligible to apply for 2023 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 **21 Montana counties** have triggered the 2023 LFP drought criteria: **Blaine, Chouteau,**

**Flathead, Garfield, Glacier, Hill, Lake, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, McCone, Mineral, Missoula, Pondera, Phillips, Powell, Roosevelt, Sanders, Teton, Toole, and Valley.**

Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2024, for 2023 losses.

Producers in these counties are also eligible to apply for benefits under the 2023 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) for losses relating to feed transportation, livestock transportation and water transportation costs. The new deadline for filing a notice of loss under ELAP will be the same as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 30 calendar days following the program year of which the loss occurred. Applications for payment and notices of loss must be completed no later than January 30, 2024, for 2023 losses.

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

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## USDA Announces 2024 Tribal Scholarships and Fellowships

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced two tribal higher education opportunities to train the next generation of agricultural professionals and strengthen ties with tribal higher education institutions. The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program offers a fast-track career path with USDA, and the Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Faculty Fellowship engages tribal college faculty with USDA resources and research. These programs reflect USDA's commitment to advance equity and remove barriers to service for tribal nations and encourage tribal workforce development.

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program provides full tuition, fees, books, a housing stipend, and paid workforce training to any interested and eligible student pursuing degrees in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines at a tribal college or university. New this year, **the tuition coverage can follow the student from a two-year associate program at a tribal college or university (TCU) to a four-year bachelor's degree program (at a TCU or another land-grant institution)**. When the student has completed the scholarship requirements, including a paid internship, USDA may convert the student to a permanent USDA employee without further competition.

Eligible applicants include graduating high school seniors, full-time students currently enrolled at a 1994 land-grant tribal college or university, or recent TCU associate degree graduates. For FY 2024, 27 scholarship slots are available at: Agriculture Research Service, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Apply by December 1, 2023.

[Read full story.](#)

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## Livestock Losses

Montana livestock producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster.

The [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), administered by USDA Farm Service Agency, provides assistance to eligible producers 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. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

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.

In addition, LIP provides assistance for injured livestock that are sold within 30 days of an eligible loss condition at a reduced price due to adverse weather or attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

**For livestock death losses, eligible livestock owners must file a notice of loss by the same date as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 60 calendar days after the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. Producers should document the adverse weather conditions and date(s) of weather events.**

Participants must provide all supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred. Livestock owners and contract growers must record all pertinent information, including the number and kind of all livestock adversely impacted. Some examples of required supporting documentation include:

1. Beginning Inventory Records
2. Proof of death loss documentation (if using photos, ensure that they are dated)
3. Purchase and sales records
4. Calving records (include date of birth, date of death and cause of death)
5. Preg test records (completed by 3rd party)
6. Copy of growers contracts
7. Proof of normal mortality documentation

**2023 Livestock Losses:** Producers must submit a notice of loss, application for payment, and all supporting documentation by **February 29, 2024**.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: [fsa.usda.gov/mt](https://fsa.usda.gov/mt) or [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov).

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## Storage and Handling Trucks Eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) provide low-interest financing so producers can build or upgrade facilities to store commodities. Some storage and handling trucks are eligible for the FSFL. These include:

- **Cold Storage Trucks:** A van or truck designed to carry perishable freight at specific temperatures. Cold storage trucks can be ice-cooled or equipped with any variety of mechanical refrigeration systems.
- **Flatbed Trucks:** Truck with an open body in the form of a platform with no side walls for easy loading and unloading. These trucks can be categorized into different sizes which range from light, medium, or heavy duty, compact or full-size, or short and expandable beds.
- **Grain Trucks:** A piece of farm equipment specially made to accommodate grain products and are traditionally truck chassis units with a mounted grain “dump” body where grain commodities are transported from a field to either a grain elevator or a storage bin.
- **Storage Trucks with a Chassis Unit:** Commonly referred to as a box truck, box van or straight truck, is a truck with a cargo body mounted on the same chassis with the engine and cab.
- **Semi-Trucks or Truck Tractors:** Any vehicle configuration consisting of a power-unit designed in combination to draw or pull a semi-trailer or farm machinery.

To be eligible for FSFL, the storage and handling truck must be less than 15 years old and have a maximum of four axles with a gross weight rating of 60,000 pounds or less. Pick-up trucks, semi-trucks, dump trucks, and simple insulated and ventilated vans are ineligible for FSFL.

FSFL for storage and handling trucks must be \$100,000 or less. FSFL-financed storage and handling trucks must be used for the purpose for which they were acquired for the entire FSFL term.

Eligible commodities include grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, hay, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables, floriculture, hops, maple sap, milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, eggs, meat/poultry (unprocessed), rye and aquaculture.

For more information or to apply for a FSFL, contact your local [FSA Service Center](#).

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## USDA Provides \$5 Million in Second Round of Payments to Help Organic Dairy Producers Cover Increased Costs

USDA is announcing a second round of payments for dairy producers approved to receive assistance through the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP). ODMAP was established to help mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs, and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) accepted applications for ODMAP between May 24 and August 11, 2023, and has already paid out almost \$15 million to eligible applicants. The second round of payments will be processed for dairy producers enrolled in ODMAP and will add approximately \$5 million in payments. Read the full news release here: [USDA Provides \\$5 Million in Second Round of Payments to Help Organic Dairy Producers Cover Increased Costs](#)

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# Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations

## August Milk Margin Triggered the Eighth Consecutive DMC Payment

The August milk margin triggered the eighth consecutive payment for dairy producers who obtained [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) for the 2023 program year. August's income over feed margin is \$6.46 per hundredweight (cwt.) with projected DMC payments totaling \$120 million. To date, including the projected August payments, dairy producers have received more than \$1.2 billion in much needed economic support for 2023 and margin forecasts indicate the likelihood of more to come before the end of the calendar year. Read the full news release here: [Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations \(usda.gov\)](#)

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages urban producers, innovative producers and other stakeholders to submit comments for and virtually attend the upcoming public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (Committee) on Nov. 29, 2023.

"USDA relies on input from the urban agriculture and innovative production community to develop programs that meet their needs," said Terry Cosby, Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which houses USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). "I encourage members of the public to attend and submit comments for the Committee."

The virtual meeting will run from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern on Nov. 29, 2023. To attend virtually, register by Nov. 29, 2023, on the [Committee's webpage](#). To submit comments, send by 11:59 p.m. ET on Dec. 13, 2023, through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Docket NRCS-2023-0019.

For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

**Read the full announcement Here.**

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## Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
  - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) and/or visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be successful. FSA staff will provide guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial credit. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

If a farm loan borrower can't make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#) and/or visit [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Intertribal Agriculture Council Serves as a Cooperator for IRA 22007 Discrimination Financial Assistance Program



## **Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region Serves as Cooperator for the IRA 22007 Discrimination Financial Assistance Program**

IAC is serving as a “cooperator” to ensure that the latest information about the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program reaches Tribal producers and to provide direct assistance to Tribal producers during virtual and in-person events throughout the application period. As a cooperator, IAC also makes requests for improvements to USDA guidance on the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program based on feedback we hear from Tribal producers. Please visit our website to follow up with updates and resources. [IAC | Providing Assistance with USDA's DFAP \(indianag.org\)](https://indianag.org)

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## **Registration for the 2024 Montana Soil Health Symposium is Now Open**

The [Montana Soil Health Symposium](#) is hosted by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. It brings together national and local speakers to discuss soil health techniques and innovations.

This two-day event features well-known voices for regenerative agriculture and soil health like Kelsey Scott of The DX Ranch on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, Anne Bikle who wrote *What Your Food Ate: How to Health the Land and Reclaim our Health*, and Dr. Jon Lundgren of the ECDYSIS Foundation and Blue Dasher Farm.

Adding to these speakers are eight Montana producers covering topics relevant to farmers, ranchers, and gardeners of all sizes working to produce healthy, nutritious foods using the soil health principles.

You'll also hear from several other well-known speakers from across the country that are dedicated to innovative, regenerative agriculture and sharing their experience from farming, ranching, consulting, and running their own businesses.

A pre-conference workshop on Holistic Management with Joshua and Tara Dukart is scheduled for Feb. 6, 2024.

**Early bird pricing closes November 30, 2023, so [register now!](#)**

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## **USDA NASS Notifies Producers of the Agricultural Resource Management Survey**



USDA NASS will be conducting the Agricultural Resource Management Survey focused on cost of raising barley and oats, Row Crop County Estimates, Cost of Pollinators, and Agricultural Labor Surveys during the month of November.

December Acreage and production will mail out around the end of November.

It is good to note that these are the yearend surveys that programs are based on, your prompt response is appreciated.

In February, NASS will release state level Census of Agriculture data and will follow that with county data released in May. The Census of Agriculture data is the most comprehensive ag data at the county level and most farm bill programs use as a benchmark.

Thank you, producers, for taking the time to share your story. To find results of NASS surveys please visit [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics by State/Montana/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/index.php)

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Eric Sommer State Statistician, Montana at 1-800-392-3202.

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## Baled Hay and the Imported Fire Ant

If you buy, sell, or produce baled hay, check out USDA's factsheet titled "[Questions and Answers: Moving Baled Hay From Areas Under Quarantine for Imported Fire Ant](#)." This publication contains useful information for farmers, ranchers, hay growers, and suppliers as they respond to livestock needs in drought-hit states. Its goal is to help support commerce and the movement of hay, while guarding against the further spread of the imported fire ant. The factsheet's web address is <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/baled-hay>.

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**FSA Policy Reminders:** 2021 Annual Notification to FSA Customers

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State Conservationist:  
TOM WATSON

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Web: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

Regional Director:  
ERIC BASHORE

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

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