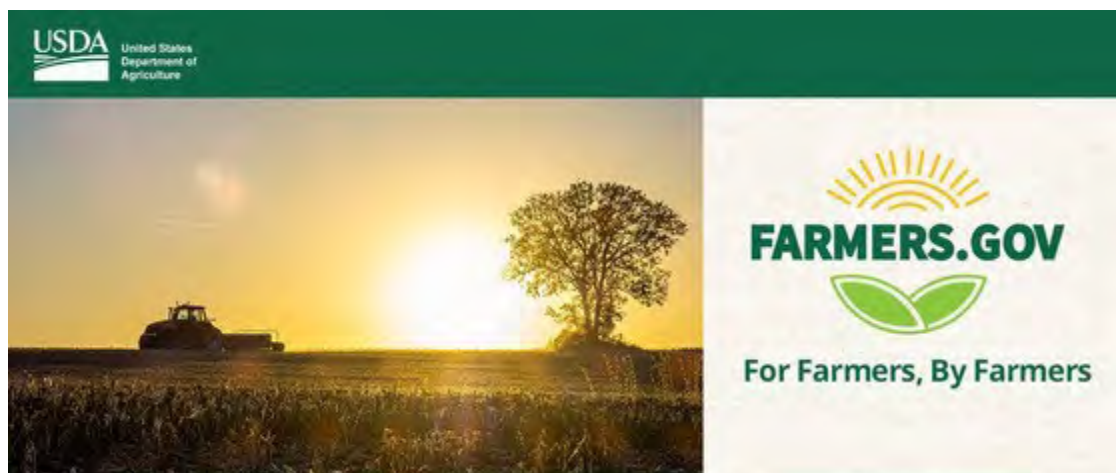




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Find contact information for your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator. Producers can also learn more about how to leverage digital tools by visiting <https://www.farmers.gov/mydocs>.



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 and fsa.usda.gov/mt.

Oct. 31, 2022: Deadline to enroll in Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program (OTECP) and Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

Nov. 1, 2022: Last day of CRP grazing (requires prior approval).

Nov. 15, 2022: Deadline for FSA Maps - 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. 9, 2022: Deadline to enroll in the Dairy Margin Coverage program.

Jan. 3, 2023: Honey covered under NAP (or 30 days after placement of colonies)

Jan. 16, 2023: Established stand alfalfa seed, fall alfalfa seed, and cherries for acreage reporting

Jan. 30, 2023: Deadline to request all ELAP assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

Jan. 30, 2023: Deadline to request LFP assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

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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Biden-Harris Administration Makes \$500 Million Available to Increase Innovative American-Made Fertilizer Production

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the Biden-Harris Administration is making \$500 million in grants available to increase American-made fertilizer production to spur competition and combat price hikes on U.S. farmers caused by the war in Ukraine.

The Biden-Harris Administration's [Fertilizer Production Expansion Program](#) is part of a whole-of-government effort to promote competition in agricultural markets. The funds are being made available through the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Eligible entities are for-profit businesses and corporations, nonprofit entities, Tribes and Tribal organizations, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, and state or local governments. Private entities must be independently owned and operated to apply.

The Department will begin accepting applications in the coming days via www.grants.gov. Notably, there will be two opportunities for submission. [Learn more](#).

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NRCS Sets Conservation Program Funding Application Date for October 28

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). To be considered for funding in the current cycle, producers and landowners should apply by October 28, 2022.

“NRCS provides funding and technical assistance to help farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners implement conservation practices that improve their environmental and economic sustainability,” said Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist for Montana. “Conservation work focused on local outcomes with the support of local partners and land managers achieves meaningful conservation across a landscape. These opportunities are open to ag operations of any scale.”

Conservation funding is available for the following programs and initiatives:

Conservation Incentive Contracts: Conservation Incentive Contracts are an option under EQIP, with a focus on climate-smart forestry and agriculture and drought resilience management practices. EQIP-CIC provides financial assistance to adopt conservation activities on working landscapes.

Community Agriculture: Building on the high tunnel initiative available in the past, the community agriculture initiative offers an expanded set of conservation practices tailored to the conservation needs of small-scale ag producers.

Joint Chiefs' Partnership Restoration Projects: The U.S. Forest Service and NRCS are working together to improve the health of forests and reduce wildfire threats to communities where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. There are currently four projects in Montana, including the Connecting Fuels Treatments in the Salish Mountains and Whitefish Range Project, Fire Adapted Bitterroot Project, Gallatin Valley Forest Resiliency and Watershed Health Project, and the Libby Surround Project.

National On-Farm Energy Initiative: Agricultural producers work with NRCS-approved technical service providers to develop agricultural energy management plans or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. NRCS may also provide assistance to implement recommended measures identified in the energy audit through the use of conservation practice standards.

National Organic Initiative: Producers currently certified as organic, transitioning to organic, or National Organic Program exempt will have access to a broad set of conservation practices to assist in treating their resource concerns while fulfilling many of the requirements in an Organic System Plan.

National Water Quality Initiative: This initiative focuses assistance in small watersheds to improve water quality where this is a critical concern. With the help of partners at the local, state and national level, NRCS identified priority watersheds in Montana where on-farm conservation investments will deliver the greatest water quality benefits. The two projects in Montana are located in the Lower Gallatin watershed (Camp and Godfrey Creeks) and the Shields River watershed.

Sage Grouse Initiative: Producers can work with NRCS on three different components to improve sage-grouse habitat. One is a general category to implement prescribed grazing management practices. The others are to seed cropland back to perennial species to improve the connectivity for sage-grouse that depend on large, intact landscapes and the removal of conifers to increase nest success rates.

Targeted Implementation Plans: Montana NRCS targets its investments in very specific areas to achieve clearly defined natural resource goals as identified by local partners. This approach harnesses the power of multiple producers in one area undertaking similar conservation projects to achieve a regional or landscape-scale result. There are nearly 100 local projects currently available in fiscal year 2023.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program: The RCPP promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Currently, there are three RCPP land management projects in Montana, including the Big Game Habitat Improvement Project, Northern Great Plains Grassland Conservation Project, and the Gallatin Valley Land Trust project.

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. In Montana, historically underserved participants, including limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers will receive a higher payment rate for eligible conservation practices applied.

The CSP is for working lands. For farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, CSP can help find new ways to meet resource and operation goals. All of the land in a producer's agricultural operation must be enrolled to be eligible for CSP.

This year, the Conservation Planning Workbook will be a required part of the CSP application package. Request a printed copy of the workbook from your local USDA service center.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round; however, applications for the next funding consideration must be submitted by October 28, 2022. Applications made after the cutoff will be considered in the next funding cycle. Additional information is available on the Montana NRCS website at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov under the Programs tab or by contacting your [local USDA service center](#).

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Updates to Crop Insurance Plans Broaden Access for Specialty Crop, Organic, Direct Market and Other Producers

USDA is improving two of its most comprehensive risk management safety net programs, Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and Micro Farm, making them more accessible to America's agricultural producers. This includes doubling the maximum insurable revenue under WFRP, now \$17 million, more than tripling the size of farm operations eligible for Micro Farm, now \$350,000 and reducing paperwork requirements for WFRP. These improvements are in direct response to feedback from stakeholders as USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recognizes the important role these insurance options play for many producers, including specialty crop, organic and direct market producers.

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection

The [WFRP](#) program provides protection for all eligible commodities on a farm under one insurance policy. Now, producers can insure up to \$17 million in revenue (formerly \$8.5 million).

Other updates to WFRP include:

- Allowing a producer to report and self-certify yield at the beginning of the year for commodities without other insurance options in a way similar to those with individual crop policies. This will significantly reduce the amount of paperwork required to apply for WFRP.
- Eliminating expense reporting to reduce paperwork burden. In place of expense reporting, WFRP will reduce the expected revenue of commodities a producer is unable to plant to 60%, similar to prevented planting for other programs.

These updates build on others recently made to WFRP, including [expanded coverage and flexibilities for organic producers](#).

Micro Farm

The [Micro Farm program](#), offered through WFRP, provides a risk management safety net for all eligible commodities on a farm under one insurance policy, but on a smaller scale. Now, producers with farm operations up to \$350,000 in approved revenue (formerly \$100,000) can get coverage. RMA introduced the new Micro Farm program in 2021 to better serve direct market and small-scale producers. While the program is well received and feedback has been largely positive, industry partners and small, diversified producers have informed RMA that the current limit is too low to meet the needs of many interested producers. In response, the FCIC approved the increase in size for eligible farm operations.

The updates to WFRP and Micro Farm take effect in crop year 2023.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

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Virtual Workshops Highlight Improvements to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering virtual workshops – on Oct. 11, Oct. 13, Nov. 15, and Dec. 13 – 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, two of the most comprehensive risk management options available. These insurance options are especially important to specialty crop, organic, urban, and direct market producers, and this is part of the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) efforts to increase participation in these options and crop insurance overall.

RMA will host these workshops for agricultural producers via Microsoft Teams events:

- Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 11 a.m. ET ([click to join](#))
- Thursday, Oct. 13 at 4 p.m. ET ([click to join](#))
- Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 8 p.m. PT ([click to join](#))
- Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 11 a.m. ET ([click to join](#))

RSVP is not required. Attendees will have a chance to submit written questions during the event.

[Learn more.](#)

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FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)

If you've suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock;
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock,
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.*

**Hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for "empty miles."*

Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.

ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year. **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK TO FORAGE/GRAZING ACRES**

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock

transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. **Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.**

For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.

ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more information regarding ELAP, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

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USDA Announces New Opportunities to Improve Nutrient Management

USDA welcomed the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, which will deliver \$19.5 billion in new conservation funding to support climate-smart agriculture. This historic funding will bolster the new steps that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced to improve opportunities for nutrient management. NRCS will target funding, increasing program flexibilities, launch a new outreach campaign to promote nutrient management's economic benefits, in addition to expanding partnerships to develop nutrient management plans. This is part of USDA's broader effort to address future fertilizer availability and cost challenges for U.S. producers.

Through USDA's conservation programs, America's farmers and ranchers will have streamlined opportunities to improve their nutrient management planning, which provides conservation benefits while mitigating the impacts of supply chain disruptions and increased input costs.

Specifically, NRCS efforts include:

- **Streamlined Nutrient Management Initiative** – A streamlined initiative will incentivize nutrient management activities through key conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts, and the Conservation Stewardship Program. The initiative will use a ranking threshold for pre-approval and include a streamlined and expedited application process, targeted outreach to small-scale and historically underserved producers, and coordination with FSA to streamline the program eligibility process for producers new to USDA. In addition to otherwise available funding at the state level, NRCS is targeting additional FY23 funds for nutrient management. NRCS is also announcing a streamlined funding opportunity for up to \$40 million in nutrient management grant opportunities through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).
- **Nutrient Management Economic Benefits Outreach Campaign** – A new outreach campaign will highlight the economic benefits of nutrient management planning for farmers. The potential net savings to farmers who adopt a nutrient management plan is estimated to be an average of \$30 per acre for cropland. It is estimated that there are 89 million acres of cropland (28% of total U.S. cropland) currently exceeding the nitrogen loss threshold; and if all those acres implemented a nutrient management plan, the average net savings would be \$2.6 billion. NRCS staff develop nutrient management plans to help producers use nutrient resources effectively and efficiently to adequately supply soils and plants with necessary

nutrients while minimizing transport of nutrients to ground and surface waters. Producer information is available at farmers.gov/global-food-security.

- **Expanded Nutrient Management Support through Technical Service Providers Streamlining and Pilots** – New agreements with key partners who have existing capacity to support nutrient management planning and technical assistance will expand benefits and serve as a model to continue streamlining the certification process for Technical Service Providers (TSPs). NRCS is also developing new opportunities to support partner training frameworks, nutrient management outreach and education, and new incentive payments through TSP partners for nutrient management planning and implementation.

Alongside the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and American Rescue Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act provides once-in-a-generation investment in rural communities and their infrastructure needs, while also responding to the climate crisis. The bill invests \$40 billion into existing USDA programs promoting climate smart agriculture, rural energy efficiency and reliability, forest conservation, and more.

Approximately \$20 billion of this investment will support conservation programs that are oversubscribed, meaning that more producers will have access to conservation assistance that will support healthier land and water, improve the resilience of their operations, support their bottom line, and combat climate change. This includes:

- \$8.45 billion for EQIP
- \$4.95 billion for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- \$3.25 billion for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- \$1.4 billion for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

For more information and resources for nutrient management planning, visit farmers.gov/global-food-insecurity. Contact NRCS at your [local USDA Service Center](#) to get assistance with a nutrient management plan for your land.

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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.

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USDA Seeks Input on New Grant Program to Strengthen Food Supply Chain, Reduce Irregular Migration and Improve Labor Protections for Farmworkers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is gathering input to help shape a recently announced planned grant program focused on improving the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain by addressing

labor shortages in agriculture, reducing irregular migration through increased use of legal pathways, and improving labor protections for farmworkers.

The new farm labor stabilization and protection pilot grant program will use up to \$65 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to provide support for agricultural employers in implementing robust labor standards to promote a safe, healthy work environment for both U.S. workers and workers hired from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.

More on the Grant Program

The program will aim to improve the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain and advance several major Administration priorities:

- *Driving U.S. economic recovery and safeguarding domestic food security by addressing current labor shortages in agriculture.* Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, agricultural employers were struggling to secure a stable workforce. The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, threatening our domestic capacity to produce a safe and robust food supply. This pilot program will help address this shortage by expanding the potential pool of workers.
- *Reducing irregular migration through the increased use of legal pathways.* The Biden-Harris administration has taken numerous steps to address the elevated levels of irregular migration from Northern Central America. The H-2A visa program offers a lawful pathway for individuals from these countries to come to the United States to engage in temporary or seasonal agricultural work. An effective H-2A visa program is critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. This pilot program will aim to address challenges that both workers and employers face in utilizing the program.
- *Improving working conditions for farmworkers.* Strong and safe working conditions are critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. Through this pilot program, USDA will support efforts to improve working conditions for both U.S. and H-2A workers and ensure that H-2A workers are not subjected to unfair recruitment practices.

Agricultural Employer Organizations

FSA seeks input on:

- Challenges that employers face in securing a stable workforce.
- The set of incentives employers seek from USDA in order to improve their ability to hire workers from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.
- The labor standards that will make meaningful progress towards ensuring a safer and fairer working environment for both domestic and H-2A farmworkers.

Labor Unions and Farmworker Advocacy Community

FSA seeks input on:

- Barriers or challenges faced by farmworkers, specifically those from northern Central American countries participating in the H-2A visa program.
- Recommendations to enhance farmworker protections and to increase farmworker awareness of resources and worker rights.

How to Comment

FSA will consider comments received by 30 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register. Find more details in the [Sept. 21 notice on the Federal Register](#) or on fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers.

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Producers Can Now Hay, Graze and Chop Cover Crops Anytime and Still Receive Full Prevented Planting Payment

Agricultural producers with crop insurance can hay, graze or chop cover crops for silage, haylage or baleage at any time and still receive 100% of the prevented planting payment. Previously, cover crops could only be hayed, grazed or chopped after November 1, otherwise the prevented planting payment was reduced by 65%.

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) added this flexibility as part of a broader effort to encourage producers to use cover crops, an important conservation and good farming practice. Cover crops are especially important on fields prevented from planting as they help reduce soil erosion and boost soil health.

RMA recognizes that cover crops are not planted as an agricultural commodity but rather with the primary purpose for conservation benefits. For the 2021 crop year and beyond, RMA will not consider a cover crop planted following a prevented planting claim to be a second crop. But RMA will continue to consider a cover crop harvested for grain or seed to be a second crop, and it remains subject to a reduction in the prevented planting indemnity in accordance with the policy.

This decision to allow flexibility for the 2021 crop year and to make the change permanent for future years builds on the advanced research and identified benefits cover crops have supporting healthy soils and cropland sustainability efforts.

More Information

To learn more about this policy change, visit RMA's [Prevented Planting webpage](#). The webpage also has the latest Cover Crop Termination Guidelines, which USDA updated in 2019 as a result of greater flexibilities provided in the 2018 Farm Bill. Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

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USDA to Invest up to \$300 million in New Organic Transition Initiative

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced details of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) \$300 million investment, including with American Rescue Plan funds, in a new Organic Transition Initiative that will help build new and better markets and streams of income for farmers and producers. Organic production allows producers to hold a unique position in the marketplace and thus take home a greater share of the food dollar.

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, the number of non-certified organic farms actively transitioning to organic production dropped by nearly 71 percent since 2008. Through the comprehensive support provided by this initiative USDA hopes to reverse this trend, opening opportunities for new and beginning farmers and expanding direct consumer access to organic foods through increased production.

The initiative will deliver wrap-around technical assistance, including farmer-to-farmer mentoring; provide direct support through conservation financial assistance and additional crop insurance assistance, and support market development projects in targeted markets.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Risk Management Agency (RMA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are the primary agencies supporting the Initiative, which will focus on three areas.

Transition to Organic Partnership Program

Through this initiative, USDA aims to ensure that farmers transitioning to organic have the support they need to navigate that transition, including a full supply chain to American consumers who demand organic choices in their supermarkets daily. AMS will build partnership networks in six regions across the United States with trusted local organizations serving direct farmer training, education, and outreach activities. The organizations will connect transitioning farmers with mentors, building paid mentoring networks to share practical insights and advice. Each regional team will also provide community building, including train-the-mentor support; as well as technical assistance, workshops, and field days covering topics including organic production practices, certification, conservation planning, business development (including navigating the supply chain), regulations, and marketing to help transitioning and recently transitioned producers overcome technical, cultural, and financial shifts during and immediately following certification. USDA will provide up to \$100 million for this program.

Direct Farmer Assistance

NRCS will develop a new Organic Management conservation practice standard and offer financial and technical assistance to producers who implement the practice. Payments will be modeled on those already available to producers meeting the existing nutrient and pest management conservation practice standards. USDA will provide \$75 million for this effort. This will include an increase in organic expertise throughout its regions, creating organic experts at each of its regional technology support centers. These experts will train staff who provide direct services to USDA customers. These services include hosting hands-on organic training for state and field NRCS staff and fielding organic-related staff questions.

USDA will provide \$25 million to RMA for the new Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (TOGA) which will support transitioning and certain certified organic producers' participation in crop insurance, including coverage of a portion of their insurance premium.

Organic Pinpointed Market Development Support

Stakeholders have shared that specific organic markets have market development risks due to inadequate organic processing capacity and infrastructure, a lack of certainty about market access, and insufficient supply of certain organic ingredients. This AMS initiative will focus on key organic markets where the need for domestic supply is high, or where additional processing and distribution capacity is needed for more robust organic supply chains. Examples of markets seeking support include organic grain and feed; legumes and other edible rotational crops; and livestock and dairy. USDA will invest up to \$100 million to help improve organic supply chains in pinpointed markets. The Department will seek stakeholder input on these pinpointed initiatives beginning in September, resulting in an announcement of specific policy initiatives later this year.

Other USDA Organic Assistance

This USDA initiative complements [existing assistance for organic producers](#), including FSA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) and Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP). OCCSP helps producers obtain or renew their organic certification, and OTECP provides additional funding to certified and transitioning producers during the pandemic.

[NRCS offers conservation programs](#), such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which can provide assistance to help with managing weeds and pests, and establishing high tunnels, improving soil health, and implementing other practices key to organic operations. RMA also administers federal crop insurance options available to organic producers, including [Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#) and [Micro Farm](#).

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USDA Offers Greater Protection and Flexibility with RMA's Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance

If you have Federal crop insurance for crops in transition to organic or a certified organic grain or feed crop, you are eligible to receive premium assistance from the USDA for the 2023 reinsurance year. The Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance (TOGA) Program, offered by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), reduces a producer's overall crop insurance premium bills, and helps them continue to use organic agricultural systems.

RMA's TOGA — a nationwide program — is part of USDA's [Organic Transition Initiative](#), a group of programs that build more and better markets for American growers and consumers and improve the resilience of the food supply chain. Through the Organic Transition Initiative, USDA will provide support in three main areas: mentoring and advice, direct farmer assistance, and organic market security.

Premium benefits for TOGA include:

- 10 percentage points of premium subsidy for all crops in transition,
- \$5 per acre premium benefit for certified organic grain and feed crops, and
- 10 percentage points of premium subsidy for all Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) policies covering any number of crops in transition to organic or crops with the certified organic practice. Producers who have additional individual crop insurance policies will also receive the applicable premium assistance on those policies.

Eligible organic grain and feed crops are: alfalfa seed, barley, buckwheat, canola, corn, cultivated wild rice, dry beans, dry peas, flax, forage production, forage seeding, fresh market sweet corn, grain sorghum, hybrid corn seed, hybrid popcorn seed, hybrid sorghum seed, hybrid sweet corn seed, millet, oats, crops insured under the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage policy, peanuts, popcorn, rice, rye, safflower, sesame, silage sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, sweet corn, triticale, and wheat.

Producers can receive both RMA's TOGA and premium assistance from other premium subsidy programs. To be eligible for RMA's TOGA, producers must purchase an additional coverage policy. If a producer purchases an underlying policy and an additional endorsement, RMA's TOGA premium subsidy only applies to the underlying policy. There is no enrollment paperwork to apply for TOGA. Producers will automatically receive the premium assistance on the billing statements for the 2023 reinsurance year, which covers applicable policies with **sales closing dates from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023**. For most eligible crops, the 2023 reinsurance year is also the 2023 crop year.

Eligible producers who already have an insurance policy for the 2023 reinsurance year will still receive the TOGA premium subsidy. For example, for some potato, strawberry, and cabbage producers, the sales closing date for the 2023 reinsurance year has already passed. Since there is no enrollment paperwork, the premium assistance will still be automatically applied to eligible insurance policies.

You can visit the [TOGA webpage](#) for more information, including frequently asked questions, and the TOGA fact sheet.

While TOGA automatically provides premium assistance to producers who insure their crop during the 2023 reinsurance year, RMA encourages producers to contact a crop insurance agent to discuss all crop insurance opportunities. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#).

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Producers can learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

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Disaster Assistance for 2022 Livestock Forage Losses in 40 Montana counties

40 MT Counties Triggered; U.S. Drought Monitor Updated Weekly

Livestock producers in **40 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 40 Montana counties have triggered the 2022 LFP drought criteria: **Beaverhead, Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Chouteau, Daniels, Dawson, 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, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Valley and Wheatland.** 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 or fsa.usda.gov/mt.

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USDA Announces Historic Investment in Partnerships for 70 Climate-Smart Commodities and Rural Projects

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the Biden-Harris Administration through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year. Ultimately, USDA's anticipated investment will triple to more than \$3 billion in pilots that will create market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart production practices. These initial projects will expand markets for climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Applicants submitted more than 450 project proposals in this first funding pool, and the strength of the projects identified led USDA to increase its investment in this opportunity from the initial \$1 billion Vilsack announced earlier this year.

[Learn more.](#)

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USDA Opens People's Garden Initiative to Gardens Nationwide

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding its People's Garden Initiative to include eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban and urban areas can be recognized as a "People's Garden" if they register on the USDA website and meet criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices and educating the public. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People's Garden sign.

About the Gardens

USDA originally launched the People's Garden Initiative in 2009. It's named for the "People's Department," former President Abraham Lincoln's nickname for USDA, which was established during his presidency in 1862.

People's Gardens grow fresh, healthy food and support resilient, local food systems; teach people how to garden using conservation practices; nurture habitat for pollinators and wildlife and create greenspace for neighbors.

How to Register

To learn more about People's Garden or to register one, visit the People's Garden webpage at usda.gov/Peoples-Garden. The location and information on each garden will be displayed on a map. USDA will send a "People's Garden" sign to each garden and invite continued engagement through photos and information sharing. Gardens on federal property, such as USDA offices, are required to donate produce. We invite these gardens to report how much is being donated.

To be eligible, gardens:

- **Benefit the community** by providing food, green space, wildlife habitat, education space.
- **Are a collaborative effort.** This can include groups working together with USDA agencies, food banks, after school programs, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, conservation districts, etc.
- **Incorporate conservation management practices**, such as using native plant species, rain barrels, integrated pest management, xeriscaping.
- **Educate the public** about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of local, diverse, and resilient food systems providing healthy food for the community.

New gardens will join the People's Garden at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 17 other flagship gardens established earlier this year.

More Information

The People's Garden Initiative is part of USDA's broader efforts to advance equity, support local and regional food systems and access to food, and encourage use of conservation and climate-smart practices.

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Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

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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's Ongoing Notice of Loss Requirements

It's important for agricultural producers to report losses immediately as all disaster programs are dependent on the timely reporting of the loss. A notice of loss can be filed with USDA Farm Service Agency via phone, email, fax or scheduled office visit.

- **ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program:** Producers will have **15 days** from when the loss is first apparent, to file a **honeybee** notice of loss. This change provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey. **For other covered livestock losses**, including livestock feed, grazing and farm-raised fish losses, the notice of loss deadline for ELAP will remain **30 days** from when the loss is first apparent to the producer.
- **LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **30** calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. Producers should document the adverse weather conditions and date(s) of weather events.

- **TAP - Tree Assistance Program:** Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation within 90 calendar days of: the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent to the producer.
- **NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **15** calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date. **Note:** A producer's signature is required on form CCC-576 when a Notice of Loss is submitted.

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage:

NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

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Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

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

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

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

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

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

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Emergency Loans Available in Montana

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

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Web: www.fsa.usda.gov/mt

State Executive Director:
MAUREEN WICKS

State Committee:
RYAN LANKFORD

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

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10 East Babcock Street, Room 443
Bozeman, MT 59715-4704
Phone: 406-587-6811
Fax: 855-510-7028
Web: www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov

State Conservationist:
TOM WATSON

USDA Risk Management Agency
Billings Regional Office
3490 Gabel Road, Suite 100
Billings, MT 59102-7302
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Email: rsomt@rma.usda.gov
Web: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/>

Regional Director:
ERIC BASHORE

Contact information for your local office, visit: www.farmers.gov.