



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Montana Newsletter - November 2022

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

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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. 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.*

**Nov. 15, 2022:** Risk Management Agency (RMA) virtual workshop on Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm insurance options.

**Dec. 9, 2022:** Deadline to enroll in the 2023 Dairy Margin Coverage program.

**Dec. 13, 2022:** RMA virtual workshop on Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm insurance options.

**Dec. 31, 2022:** Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage closing date for Honey.

**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, Honey Bees, 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.

**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, and mixed forage.

**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.

**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.

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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## 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, 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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## USDA Provides Payments of nearly \$800 Million in Assistance to Help Keep Farmers Farming

**USDA is focused on generating long-term stability and success for distressed borrowers.**

USDA announced that distressed borrowers with qualifying USDA farm loans have already received nearly \$800 million in assistance, as part of the \$3.1 billion in assistance for distressed farm loan borrowers provided through Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA directed USDA to expedite assistance to distressed borrowers of direct or guaranteed loans administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) whose operations face financial risk.

This announcement kicks off a process to provide assistance to distressed farm loan borrowers using several complementary approaches, with the goal of keeping them farming, removing obstacles that currently prevent many of these borrowers from returning to farming, and improving the way that USDA approaches borrowing and servicing. Through this assistance, USDA is focused on generating long-term stability and success for distressed borrowers.

Work has already started to bring some relief to distressed farmers. As of today, over 13,000 borrowers have already benefited from the resources provided under the Inflation Reduction Act as follows:

- Approximately 11,000 delinquent direct and guaranteed borrowers had their accounts brought current. USDA also paid the next scheduled annual installment for these direct loan borrowers giving them peace of mind in the near term.
- Approximately 2,100 borrowers who had their farms foreclosed on and still had remaining debt have had this debt resolved in order to cease debt collections and garnishment relieving that burden that has made getting a fresh start more difficult.

In addition to the automatic assistance already provided, USDA has also outlined steps to administer up to an additional \$500 million in payments to benefit the following distressed borrowers:

- USDA will administer \$66 million in separate automatic payments, using COVID-19 pandemic relief funds, to support up to 7,000 direct loan borrowers who used FSA's disaster-set-aside option during the pandemic to move their scheduled payments to the end of their loans.
- USDA is also initiating two case-by-case processes to provide additional assistance to farm loan borrowers. Under the first new process, FSA will review and assist with delinquencies from 1,600 complex cases, including cases in which borrowers are facing bankruptcy or foreclosure. The second new process will add a new option using existing direct loan servicing criteria to intervene more

quickly and help an estimated 14,000 financially distressed borrowers who request assistance to avoid even becoming delinquent.

More details on each of the categories of assistance, including a downloadable fact sheet, are available on the [Inflation Reduction Act webpage on farmers.gov](#).

Similar to other USDA assistance, all of these payments will be reported as income and borrowers are encouraged to consult their tax advisors. USDA also has resources and partnerships with cooperators who can provide additional assistance and help borrowers navigate the process.

The announcement today is only the first step in USDA's efforts to provide assistance to distressed farm loan borrowers and respond to farmers and to improve the loan servicing efforts at USDA by adding more tools and relaxing unnecessary restrictions. Additional announcements and investments in assistance will be made as USDA institutes these additional changes and improvements.

This effort will ultimately also include adding more tools and relaxing unnecessary restrictions through assistance made possible by Congress through the IRA. Further assistance and changes to the approach will be made in subsequent phases.

## Background

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans, which do not include farm storage facility loans or marketing assistance loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of IRA, USDA is taking action to immediately provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers whose operations are at financial risk while working on making transformational changes to how USDA goes about loan servicing in the long run so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations and remain in good financial standing.

In January 2021, [USDA suspended foreclosures](#) and other adverse actions on direct farm loans due to the pandemic and encouraged guaranteed lenders to follow suit. Last week, USDA reiterated this request to guaranteed lenders to provide time for the full set of IRA distressed borrower assistance to be made available before lenders take irreparable actions.

Producers can explore available loan options using the [Farm Loan Discovery Tool on farmers.gov](#) (also [available in Spanish](#)) or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also call the FSA call center at 877-508-8364 between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Eastern. USDA has tax-related resources available at [farmers.gov/taxes](#).

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## USDA Invests \$3.3 Million in Two New Partnerships to Expand Outreach on Crop Insurance to Underserved Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently invested about \$3.3 million in two new partnerships that will train and equip the next generation of crop insurance agents, adjusters and outreach educators about crop insurance options. These partnerships with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) and the University of Arkansas' Southern Risk Management Education Center further efforts by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) to broaden participation in crop insurance, especially among underserved producers.

"Crop insurance strengthens American agriculture, and we want to make sure all farmers, especially those traditionally left behind, are aware of the tools available to manage risk," said RMA Administrator Marcia Bunger. "We have a lot of work to do to engage underserved producers in our risk management tools. These two partnerships will let us engage with communities that have historically lacked access to resources and

education. Both partnerships aim to cultivate creativity and innovation as they work to empower, educate and provide outreach to underserved producers.”

**The Intertribal Agricultural Council (IAC), about \$1.9 million:** RMA and the IAC will strategically engage with minority-serving institutions and underserved stakeholder groups that will train, credential, and establish a pipeline of crop insurance agents and adjusters within underserved agricultural communities. The initiative’s goal is to increase the representation of underserved insurance agents and loss adjusters providing service to underserved communities.

Kari Jo Lawrence, Executive Director of the IAC, said: “I commend USDA’s Risk Management Agency for investing in this project and understanding that designing and implementing programs that engage community members directly increases impact and reduces inefficiencies. Joining forces with our partners—Rural Coalition, Annie’s Project and Alcorn State University—enhances delivery efforts in all sectors of historically underserved communities. It also ensures a lasting effect across the crop insurance sector to deliver available risk management options.”

**The Southern Risk Management Education Center at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, about \$1.4 million:** This partnership will strengthen outreach and technical assistance to underserved farmers and ranchers through the development of risk management program navigators. These navigators will be program specialists trained by project collaborators to provide strategic outreach and engage underserved agricultural populations about federal crop insurance.

Ronald Rainey, Professor and Assistant Vice-President at the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said: “The University of Arkansas’ Southern Risk Management Education Center is excited to leverage its risk management expertise and grass-roots relationships developed across the region to enhance understanding of RMA products and services. A collection of aligned project activities will intentionally seek to enhance engagement with communities and farmers who have been historically underserved by federal crop insurance.”

These partners were chosen because they have a proven track record of success working with RMA and have the infrastructure needed to be successful in strengthening the education and outreach on increasing adoption of risk management tools in underserved agricultural communities. The University of Arkansas has expertise and vast knowledge of working with underserved producers in the Southeastern region. IAC has a track record of success working with Native Americans, and they will be partnering with three other entities that have knowledge and experience working with underserved communities.

In addition to the \$3.3 million investment noted above for the two new partnerships, RMA has invested \$3.19 million since 2021 in partnerships involving 25 projects with dozens of awardees (and sub-awardees) to expand outreach and education on crop insurance through the Risk Management Education Partnership Program, authorized under Section 522(d) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act. Additionally, RMA has [launched a new “Roadshow”](#) to provide information on two key insurance options for underserved, specialty crop, organic and small-scale producers – [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) and [Micro Farm](#). For additional information about RMA’s outreach and education efforts and the Roadshow, visit [RMA’s Outreach and Education webpage](#).

## More Information

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](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](#).

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# USDA Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023. USDA's new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements, which is part of USDA's broader effort to transform the food system to create a more level playing field for small and medium producers and a more balanced, equitable economy for everyone working in food and agriculture.

Specialty crop operations can apply for assistance for eligible expenses related to a 2022 food safety certificate issued on or after June 21, 2022, beginning June 27, 2022. USDA is delivering FSCSC to provide critical assistance for specialty crop operations, with an emphasis on equity in program delivery while building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions. Vilsack made the announcement from Hollis, N.H., where he toured a local, family-owned farm and highlighted USDA's efforts to help reduce costs for farmers and support local economies by providing significant funding to cut regulatory costs and increase market opportunities for farmers in New Hampshire and across the nation.

## Program Details

FSCSC will assist specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023. For each year, FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing their certification, as well as a portion of their related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2022 (issued on or after June 21, 2022) or 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.
- Training.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety).

## Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2022 is June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date. FSA will issue payments at the time of application approval for 2022 and after the application period ends for 2023. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.



Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Producers can visit [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety) for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

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## Farmers Can Now 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). Signup began Monday, and 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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## **Dairy Producers Can Now Enroll for 2023 Signup for Dairy Margin Coverage**

Dairy producers can now enroll for 2023 coverage through the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program, an important safety net program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that helps producers manage changes in milk and feed prices. Last year, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) took steps to improve coverage, especially for small- and mid-sized dairies, including offering a new Supplemental DMC program and updating its feed cost formula to better address retroactive, current and future feed costs. These changes continue to support producers through this year's signup, which ends Dec. 9, 2022.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.



So far in 2022, DMC payments to more than 17,000 dairy operations have triggered for August for more than \$47.9 million. According to DMC margin projections, an indemnity payment is projected for September as well. At \$0.15 per hundredweight for \$9.50 coverage, risk coverage through DMC is a relatively inexpensive investment.

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, aside from a \$100 administrative fee. Limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or a military veteran farmers or ranchers are exempt from paying the administrative fee, if requested. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

### **Supplemental DMC**

Last year, USDA introduced Supplemental DMC, which provided \$42.8 million in payments to better help small- and mid-sized dairy operations that had increased production over the years but were not able to enroll the additional production. Supplemental DMC is also available for 2023.

Supplemental DMC coverage is applicable to calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023. Eligible dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of established production history may enroll supplemental pounds.

For producers who enrolled in Supplemental DMC in 2022, the supplemental coverage will automatically be added to the 2023 DMC contract that previously established a supplemental production history.

Producers who did not enroll in Supplemental DMC in 2022 can do so now. Producers should complete their Supplemental DMC enrollment before enrolling in 2023 DMC. To enroll, producers will need to provide their 2019 actual milk marketings, which FSA uses to determine established production history.

### **DMC Payments**

Additionally, FSA will continue to calculate DMC payments using updated feed and premium hay costs, making the program more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses. These updated feed calculations use 100% premium alfalfa hay rather than 50%. The benefits of these feed cost adjustments were realized in the recent August 2022 margin payment as current high feed and premium hay costs were considered in payment calculations.

### **More Information**

In addition to DMC, USDA offers other risk management tools for dairy producers, including the [Dairy Revenue Protection \(DRP\)](#) plan that protects against a decline in milk revenue (yield and price) and the [Livestock Gross Margin \(LGM\)](#) plan, which provides protection against the loss of the market value of livestock minus the feed costs. Both DRP and LGM livestock insurance policies are offered through the Risk Management Agency. Producers should contact their local [crop insurance agent](#) for more information.

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

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## **Register for the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Webinar**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and partners are hosting a webinar for stakeholders and producers that focuses on the new Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) program. FSCSC will provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023.

The webinar will be held on Thursday, Nov. 3, 2022, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. eastern and will be recorded. Please register in advance of the webinar at [www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\\_v4FQsCFLROmC8ZvuZ73VrA](http://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_v4FQsCFLROmC8ZvuZ73VrA).

Webinar topics include:

- FSCSC overview and eligibility requirements
- Overview of Food Safety Certification Requirements for Specialty Crops by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and Toolkit Overview for GAP and Food Safety Plan Quality Management Systems by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
- Additional resources

The FSCSC application period for 2022 runs through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date.

Producers can visit [farmers.gov/food-safety](http://farmers.gov/food-safety) for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

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## USDA Designates Three Montana Counties as Primary Natural Disaster Areas

This Secretarial natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through [emergency loans](#). Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinance of certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

**Impacted Area:** Montana **Triggering Disaster #1:** Excessive rain, hail, high winds, and a tornado that occurred during June 7 through July 9, 2022. **Application Deadline:** May 15, 2023 **Primary Counties Eligible:** Liberty **Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:** Montana: Chouteau, Hill, Pondera and Toole

**Impacted Area:** Montana **Triggering Disaster #2:** Excessive rain, hail, and high winds that occurred during June 11 through July 10, 2022. **Application Deadline:** May 15, 2023 **Primary Counties Eligible:** Big Horn and Wibaux **Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:** Montana: Carbon, Dawson, Fallon, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Treasure, Yellowstone **North Dakota:** Golden Valley and McKenzie **Wyoming:** Big Horn and Sheridan

### More Resources

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan

applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting [farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool](https://farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool) and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

## Background

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA is taking action to immediately [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) whose operations are at financial risk while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

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

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) today 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

“The FSA state committee members play an integral role in the continuity of operations, equitable and inclusive program administration and ensure the overall integrity of services to the nation’s agricultural producers,” said Marcus Graham, FSA Deputy Administrator for Field Operations. “These individuals have proven themselves to be leaders, early adopters and key influencers in the agriculture industry in their respective states – qualities that will serve them well in these key Biden-Harris Administration leadership positions.

The Farm Service Agency serves farmers, ranchers, foresters, and agricultural partners through the effective, efficient, and equitable delivery of federal agricultural programs. The Agency offers producers a strong safety net through the administration of farm commodity and disaster programs. Additionally, through conservation programs, FSA continues to preserve and protect natural resources and provides credit to agricultural producers who are unable to receive private, commercial credit, including targeted loan funds for beginning, underserved, women and military veterans involved in production agriculture.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://usda.gov).

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## Disaster Assistance for 2022 Livestock Forage Losses in 41 Montana Counties

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

Livestock producers in **41 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 41 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, Silver Bow, 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](http://www.farmers.gov) or [fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://fsa.usda.gov/mt).

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## 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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## USDA Announces Details for the Upcoming Census of Agriculture

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to be represented in the nation's only comprehensive and impartial agriculture data for every state, county and territory. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will mail the 2022 Census of Agriculture to millions of agriculture producers across the 50 states and Puerto Rico this fall.

The 2022 Census of Agriculture will be mailed in phases, starting with an invitation to respond online in November followed by paper questionnaires in December. Farm operations of all sizes, urban and rural, which produced and sold, or normally would have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural product in 2022 are included in the ag census.

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. It highlights land use and ownership, producer characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, among other topics. Between ag census years, NASS considers revisions to the questionnaire to document changes and emerging trends in the industry. Changes to the 2022 questionnaire include new questions about the use of precision agriculture, hemp production, hair sheep, and updates to internet access questions.

To learn more about the Census of Agriculture, visit [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus) or call 800-727-9540. On the website, producers and other data users can access frequently asked questions, 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](#).

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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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## 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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## Applying for Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes [loans to youth](#) to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

### Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

1. Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
2. Be 10 years to 20 years of age
3. Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
4. Be unable to get a loan from other sources
5. Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
6. Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

For help preparing the application forms, contact your local USDA Service Center and/or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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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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## 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](#)

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).