

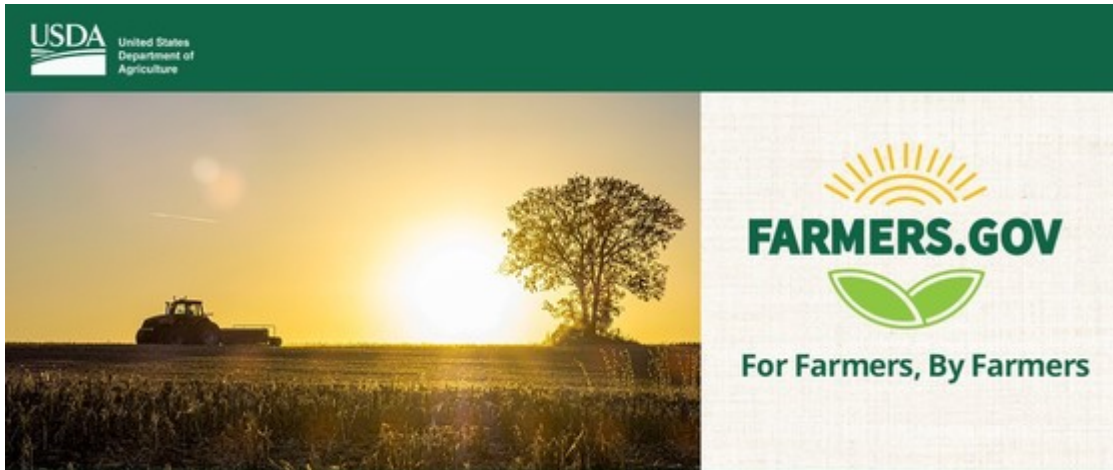


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Some USDA Service Centers in Montana are open to limited visitors by appointment only. Contact your Service Center to schedule an appointment. You can find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator. Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Producers can learn more about how to leverage these digital offerings 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.

Jan. 3: 2022 Acreage Reporting Deadline for Honey covered under NAP (or 30 days after placement of colonies). Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2021 reports for these crops.

Jan. 17: 2022 Acreage Reporting Deadline Established Stand Alfalfa Seed, Fall Alfalfa Seed and Cherries. Please note that this is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2021 reports for these crops.

Jan. 31: 2021 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) Application for Payment Deadline for timely filed 2021 ELAP notices of losses

Jan. 31: Deadline for the 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) Application and all supporting documentation

Jan. 31: Final availability date for Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) for prior year harvested peanuts, wool, mohair and LDP only for unshorn pelts

Feb. 4: Deadline for the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program

Feb. 18: Deadline to enroll in the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program

Feb. 25: Deadline to enroll in the Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP)

March 1: Deadline for the 2021 Livestock Indemnity Program Application for Payment and all supporting documentation for timely filed 2021 LIP notices of livestock losses.

March 1: CRP Spring Non-emergency Grazing season starts. Prior approval is required.

March 15: Last day of 2022 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Election and Enrollment Period

March 15: 2022 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Coverage Application Closing Date for all Spring Crops except Spring-Seeded Canola, Rye, Speltz, Triticale, Wheat and Mixed Forage

March 31: Final availability date for Loans and LDPs for prior year harvested Wheat, Barley, Canola, Crambe, Flaxseed, Honey, Oats, Rapeseed, and Sesame Seed

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

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

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

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

For each year, OTECP covers 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category (crop, livestock, wild crop, handling and State Organic Program fee). This includes application fees, inspection fees, USDA organic certification costs, state organic program fees and more.

Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. This includes fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan.

For both certified operations and transitional operations, OTECP covers 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the expense of soil testing required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

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

Additional Organic Support

OTECP builds upon USDA's [Organic Certification Cost Share Program \(OCCSP\)](#) which provides cost share assistance of 50%, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope, to producers and handlers of agricultural products

who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the NOP. Although the application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021, FSA will consider late-filed applications for those operations who still wish to apply.

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

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

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USDA Expands Partnerships for Conservation Through Its Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

New Partners are Encouraged to Apply

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is leveraging its authorities under the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to bring in new types of partners and ultimately expand opportunities in voluntary conservation for the Nation's agricultural producers and private landowners. In direct response to feedback from state agencies, Tribes, non-profits and other groups, USDA has updated CREP's rule regarding matching fund requirements, and invested in additional staff to work directly with partners for streamlined, partner-driven conservation efforts.

CREP is part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and enables USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), through Farm Service Agency (FSA), and partners to co-invest in partner-led projects. CREP also plays an important role in USDA's broader climate change strategy, bringing together producers, landowners and partners for climate-smart land management.

Matching Funds

A Dec. 6, 2019, rule required that 50% of matching funds from partners be in the form of direct payments, which made it more difficult for diverse types of groups to participate as partners in CREP. With this rule change, partners can now provide their negotiated level of matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance. This change allows for greater flexibility and opportunity for additional partners to participate in the program.

This change was enacted through a [Dec. 13, 2021 rule in the *Federal Register*](#).

The rule also updated policy to now provide a full annual rental rate to producers who are impacted by state, Tribal or local laws, ordinances and regulations that require a resource conserving or environmental protection measure. The previous rule reduced the rental payment made to producers who were covered by such laws.

Additional Capacity to Support Partners and Producers

In order to implement these changes, FSA has hired three new CREP staff members, using a regional approach to work closely with potential and existing partners and expand program availability. The team members include:

- **Evelyn Whitesides**, focusing on Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Caribbean Region (Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands).

- **Kim Martin**, focusing on Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin.
- **Patrick Lewis**, focusing on Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Pacific Basin, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

These investments in CREP staffing build on other recent outreach and education efforts by FSA, including a [\\$4.7 million investment announced this year](#) to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers on a variety of CCC and FSA programs, including conservation programs.

Currently, all CREP partners are States; however, FSA is strongly encouraging Tribes and non-governmental organizations to consider partnerships. This program is a great vehicle for their conservation-focused efforts.

About CREP

Currently, CREP has 34 projects in 26 states. In total, more than 860,000 acres are enrolled in CREP.

Eligible partners include States, Tribal groups, and non-governmental organizations. Potential partners interested in CREP should contact their FSA [State Office](#) or one of the new CREP team members listed above.

More Information

Earlier this year, FSA rolled out a number of improvements to CRP, which included a larger emphasis on climate-smart agriculture through a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP general and continuous signups. Learn more in our [“What’s New with CRP” fact sheet](#). These updates to CREP build on FSA’s larger effort to improve all components of CRP.

To learn about CREP and other CRP opportunities, producers and landowners should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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2022 Montana's Next Generation Conference: Virtual Sessions

The 2022 Montana’s Next Generation Conference will provide six powerful evening sessions covering recordkeeping, markets, marketing, crop production, succession planning, and business topics. Sessions will be on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., beginning January 11. All sessions will be broadcast and accessible online. Sessions will be free, but registration is required at <https://tinyurl.com/3py9unt9> or via the link at www.mtnextgen.com.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers can complete their borrower training requirements through the series by participating in three evenings of their choice and completing the quiz and evaluation for those sessions.

Sessions will be as follows:

Jan. 11 – Lacy Roberts, Glacier County Farm Loan Manager, will start the series off with Beginning Financial and Production Recordkeeping. She will cover the basics of developing a balance sheet and cash flow along with how to keep track of income and expenses.

Jan. 13 – Al Kluis, Kluis Commodity Advisors, will give an in-depth look into the 2022 commodity markets. He will help producers develop their own marketing plan while learning how they can use futures and options through activities to make it personal for each operation.

Korey Fauque of Happy Steer Ranch and KW Insurance will share how they have successfully integrated livestock into their farming operation and the lessons they have learned from direct marketing their beef.

Jan. 18 – The Changing Face of Agriculture – Wade McAlpine, Northwest Farm Credit Services appraiser, will cover land values and factors impacting current sales. Marlee Sandry of USDA Rural Development will follow up with Value Added Agriculture and opportunities for farmers and ranchers to grow their profits through a value-added enterprise. The Western Sustainability Exchange will have Chris Mehus and Holly Stoltz on to cover carbon credits for the farm or ranch and what it means as a producer.

Jan. 20 – Marketing and 2022 crop production will be the topic of the night. Al Kluis will provide Part II of his session on developing a marketing plan for your farm or ranch.

Joe Nelson, Market Intelligence Officer for WinField United Adjuvants, will cover crop inputs for the coming growing season. He'll have an outlook for input prices, discuss what is driving input costs, and provide suggestions for how producers can prepare and plan.

Jan. 25 – Ty McDonald of Waddel & Reed will cover succession planning for the farm or ranch. No matter your stage in the process, Ty will share tips for moving forward with the transition of the agricultural business to the next generation.

Jan. 27 – Taxes and Legal Issues – The conference will conclude with Britney Tempel of Montana Roots Accounting, PLLC and Brian Lee of Lee Law Offices presenting. Britney will share updates in the tax accounting world and how to manage the tax and cash flow side of a drought. Brian will wrap up with current legal issues in agriculture.

For registration questions, please contact Kari Lewis at (406) 873-2239 or kari.lewis@montana.edu. For FSA borrower training questions, please contact Lacy Roberts at (406) 873-5618 (ext. 2060) or lacy.roberts@usda.gov.

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Livestock Losses

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

The [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP), administered by USDA Farm Service Agency, provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

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

For livestock death losses, eligible livestock owners must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. Producers should document the adverse weather conditions and date(s) of weather events.

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

- Beginning Inventory Records
- Proof of death loss documentation
- Purchase and sales records
- Calving records (include date of birth, date of death and cause of death)
- Preg test records (completed by 3rd party)
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

2021 Livestock Losses: In addition to filing a timely notice of loss, producers must submit an application for payment and all supporting documentation by **March 1, 2022**.

2022 Livestock Losses: In addition to filing a timely notice of loss, producers must submit an application for payment and all supporting documentation by **March 1, 2023**.

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

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USDA Improves, Strengthens Crop Insurance for Hemp Producers

WASHINGTON, Dec. 2, 2021 – In response to feedback received from the producers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is improving crop insurance for hemp. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is strengthening the hemp crop insurance policy by adding flexibilities around how producers work with processors as well as improving consistency with the most recent USDA hemp regulation.

"Hemp is an emerging crop, and we are working with hemp producers to provide insurance options that make sense for producers and for insurance providers," RMA Administrator Marcia Bunger said. "RMA has worked to expand and refine our offerings to be responsive and dynamic."

RMA revised the policy to add flexibility to the insurability requirements for hemp under contract. Producers are no longer required to deliver hemp without economic value for insurability. However, contracts between producers and processors may still include delivery requirements. Additionally, RMA clarified how the amount of insurable acreage is determined if the processor contract specifies both an acreage and a production amount. This change was made in the policy to ensure producers know how their insurable acreage is determined for those contracts.

Other Updates

To ensure consistency across USDA, RMA updated references to regulations, including the [Agriculture Marketing Service final rule](#), which took effect March 22, 2021.

Additionally, RMA added a new requirement for producers who grow direct-seeded hemp, or hemp grown from seeds planted in the ground. Before insurance attaches, producers must have acreage inspected and must have a minimum of 1,200 live plants per acre. This requirement was added to align direct-seeded hemp with the common farming practice for transplanted Cannabidiol (CBD) of transplanting at least 1,200 live plants per acre.

About the Hemp Policy

The hemp crop insurance policy provides Actual Production History (APH) coverage against loss of yield due to insurable causes of loss for hemp grown for fiber, grain, or CBD oil. The Farm Bill defines hemp as containing 0.3% or less tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) on a dry-weight basis. Hemp having THC above the federal statutory compliance level of 0.3% is an uninsurable or ineligible cause of loss and will result in the hemp production being ineligible for production history purposes.

The hemp crop insurance policy is available in certain counties within 25 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

In 2021, hemp producers insured 12,189 acres and 59 policies to protect \$10.9 million in liabilities.

Other Coverage for Hemp

In addition to the APH crop insurance policy, coverage for hemp is available through Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, the Nursery crop insurance program, and the Nursery Value Select pilot crop insurance program. Additionally, the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program coverage, offered through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), protects against losses associated with lower yields, destroyed crops or prevented planting where no permanent federal crop insurance program is available.

The 2018 Farm Bill reclassified and legalized the regulated production of industrial hemp as an agricultural commodity (it is now legal to grow industrial hemp). Hemp producers can learn more at farmers.gov/hemp.

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](https://www.rma.usda.gov). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at www.rma.usda.gov.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In 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 www.usda.gov.

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Beginning or Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

Resources and tools for those just starting out.

Agriculture is an inherently risky business. Some risks are everyday business risks; some risks are brought on by natural disasters. Producers need to regularly manage for financial, marketing, production, human resource, and legal risks.

USDA offers tools to assist producers as they meet these planning needs, including access to risk-management tools, such as crop insurance, or information regarding markets and risk, technical assistance coping with common risks, protection from the spread of animal and plant diseases and pests, and, when applicable, assistance recovering from natural disasters.

Through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, USDA provides crop insurance to American farmers and ranchers to help them manage risks on their farms and ranches. There are many types of insurance products available for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

The primary goal of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR) and the Veteran Farmer and Rancher (VFR) programs is to help new farmers or veteran farmers enter into farming and ranching by providing support and the tools needed to succeed.

As a new farmer or producer there is a lot of information available through USDA. Before you consider crop insurance, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers.

Fact Sheets

- [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Benefits for Crop Insurance](#)
- [Veteran Farmer and Rancher Benefits for Federal Crop Insurance](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

- [Beginning Farmer and Rancher and Veteran Farmer and Rancher Benefits](#)

Press Releases

- [USDA Announces Implementation of Improvements to Prevented Planting Coverage and the Beginning and Veteran Farmer and Rancher Program](#)
- [USDA Stands Up New Team to Better Serve Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
- [Crop Insurance Benefits Available to Military Veteran Farmers, Ranchers](#)

More Information

- [Find a crop insurance agent near you by using the RMA Agent Locator](#)
- [See the 2018 Farm Bill for background on the legislation behind the benefits](#)
- [Get information about other benefits at USDA's New Farmer website](#)

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NRCS Announces New EQIP Funding Opportunity for Tribal Producers

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana is offering a new assistance opportunity for agricultural producers through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). While NRCS accepts applications year-round, producers and landowners should apply by the Feb. 18, 2022, ranking date to be considered for this year's funding.

"EQIP is our flagship conservation program. By focusing the expanded benefits of the Conservation Incentive Contracts in high priority areas, we're enabling Tribal producers to strengthen their land management and conservation practices," said Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist for Montana.

The [EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts](#) will be targeted to include socially disadvantaged producers operating on Montana's seven reservations and in Blaine, Cascade, Glacier, and Hill counties.

The 2018 Farm Bill created the new Conservation Incentive Contracts option to address high-priority conservation and natural resources concerns. Through 5- to 10-year contracts, producers manage, maintain and address important natural resource concerns and build on existing conservation efforts. Conservation Incentive Contracts were piloted in select states in fiscal year 2021. The opportunity is now available nationwide.

Ranking dates for all programs and states are available at nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates. Applications received after ranking dates will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

To learn more about Conservation Incentive Contracts, visit the [NRCS website](#). You can also contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

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2022 Montana Soil Health Symposium: How to Have Your Soil and Keep Your Bottom Line Too

Ranchers, farmers, and small acreage owners across Montana and beyond are talking about soil, their successes, ongoing challenges, the latest and greatest technologies, and lessons learned.

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts is hosting the second annual Soil Health Symposium Feb. 9-10, 2022. This two-day event is centered around peer-to-peer conversations and experience-based presentations from many aspects of agriculture. We dive into the biological components of soil, managing productive land, tools and techniques that can enhance the nutrient value of your crop, and how to keep a healthy bottom line, too! You'll hear Bill Milton, a rancher from Roundup and the 2019 Leopold Conservation Award recipient, discuss how his grazing management practices benefit his land and operation. The Mannix brothers of Helmville, Mont., will describe how they've managed their agricultural enterprises through diversification. These are just two examples of Montana ag producers speaking at the symposium.

At a pre-conference workshop on Feb. 8, Jolene Brown will lead an interactive workshop about the nitty gritty work of running a successful family agricultural business and ensuring that measures are in place for transitioning the business to the next generation.

Keynote speakers Dr. Allen Williams, Understanding Ag., LLC, and Dan Kittredge, Bionutrient Food Association, will lead discussions on the future of soil health and its relationship to the future of food production. Dr. Williams will focus on the principles of regenerative agriculture. Kittredge will delve into nutrient density of food and the connections made between soil, plant, and human health.

The Montana Soil Health Symposium welcomes farmers, ranchers, gardeners, and technical specialists from different landscapes and levels of experience to join us for three days of networking and discussing how we can keep our soils fertile and productive while keeping the family business strong and effective.

Registration is open now, including special pricing for students and interns enrolled in agricultural programs. Registration is limited and on a first come-first serve basis. Get more information and see the full agenda at www.mtsoilhealth.org.

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USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new [ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool](#) is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
- Number of truckloads you normally haul.
- Normal mileage per truckload.
- Share of normal feed cost

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a [tutorial video](#) is available.

Updates to ELAP

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#); or Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.

Please note that, for all 2022 losses (including feed or water transportation costs), a Notice of Loss must be filed within 30 days of the date that the loss is apparent.

Payment Calculations

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or

military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of \$6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.

More Drought Recovery Information

USDA has taken additional steps to assist drought-impacted producers, including:

- [Extending deadlines for crop insurance premium and administrative fees, and deferring interest accrual.](#)
- [Streamlining and accelerating losses and issuance of indemnity payments for crop insurance.](#)
- [Investing \\$41.8 million through a four-state pilot of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts focused on drought practices.](#)
- [Investing \\$15 million through a block grant to the Klamath Drought Response Agency to provide payments to producers to reduce irrigation demand.](#)

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For details, producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](#) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll will need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit [farmers.gov](#) and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).

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Montana Soil Outreach

From September 2021 through July 2022, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Montana Watershed Coordination Council and partners are reaching out across the state to ask: What more might be done to better support farmers and ranchers in managing soils in Montana?

The purpose is to increase the pace and scale at which land stewards implement voluntary practices and systems to maintain and improve soil health, and thereby the long term economic and ecological vitality of agriculture in Montana. In August of 2022 a report will be shared on what was learned along with any recommendations that seem to emerge. All responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

[Learn how to participate.](#)

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Small-Scale, Local Producers Get Improved Insurance Coverage through New Micro Farm Policy

Agricultural producers with small-scale farms who sell locally can now get simplified insurance coverage through a new policy designed for their needs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed the new Micro Farm policy, which simplifies recordkeeping and covers post-production costs like washing and value-added products.

“USDA is focused on supporting local and regional food systems, and Micro Farm is one more example of how we’re helping agricultural producers with farms of all shapes and sizes to manage their unique operations and risk,” said Marcia Bunker, Administrator for USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA). “The Risk Management Agency values collaboration and feedback from our customers, and Micro Farm is one way we’re responding to producers’ needs.”

Micro Farm is offered through Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and is geared to local producers. Details include:

- **Eligibility:** Micro Farm is available to producers who have a farm operation that earns an average allowable revenue of \$100,000 or less, or for carryover insureds, an average allowable revenue of \$125,000 or less. The increase in allowable revenue for a carry-over insured will allow for some farm growth in subsequent years before they become ineligible for the program. RMA’s research showed that 85% of producers who sell locally reported they made less than \$75,000 in gross sales.
- **Coverage Levels:** All coverage levels will be available to producers using Micro Farm. This will enable producers to purchase the 80% and 85% coverage levels without providing additional paperwork.
- **Underwriting and Recordkeeping Requirements:** Micro Farm minimizes underwriting and recordkeeping requirements, and producers will not have to report expenses and individual commodities.
- **Post-production Revenue:** Producers can include post-production activities as revenue, such as washing and packaging commodities or value-added products like jam.

Micro Farm is available for the 2022 crop year. Sales closing dates are Jan. 31, 2022, Feb. 28, 2022, or March 15, 2022, depending on the producer’s county.

Producers with crops insured under another crop insurance policy or a vertically integrated operation will not be eligible.

This new policy derived from research directed by the 2018 Farm Bill, and it includes feedback from producers who grow for their local communities. [See the full report.](#)

Specialty and Organic Crops

The Micro Farm policy builds on other RMA efforts to better serve specialty and organic crop growers. This includes WFRP, which provides coverage for producers with larger operations that may not be eligible for Micro Farm. RMA recently made [improvements to WFRP](#) as part of a broader set of [new policies and expanded policies](#) to assist specialty crop and organic producers.

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](#). If you have difficulty finding an agent, contact your [RMA Regional Office](#). 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. In 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 www.usda.gov.

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NRCS in Montana Accepting Applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Montana is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) enrollment option. While NRCS accepts easement applications year-round, applications for the current funding cycle must be submitted by January 28, 2022.

[Learn more.](#)

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Montana Leopold Conservation Award Seeks Applicants

Know a Montana rancher, farmer or forestland owner who goes above and beyond in the stewardship and management of natural resources? Nominate them by March 15 for the 2022 Montana Leopold Conservation Award®. Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the award recognizes landowners who inspire others with their dedication to land, water, and wildlife habitat management on private, working land.

Sand County Foundation and national sponsor American Farmland Trust present the Leopold Conservation Award to private landowners in 23 states for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. In [Montana](#), the \$10,000 award is presented with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Rangeland Resources Committee. Nominations may be submitted on behalf of a landowner, or landowners may nominate themselves. The application can be found at www.sandcountyfoundation.org/ApplyLCA.

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2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program Available in all Montana Counties

January 31 Application Deadline

Livestock producers in all **56 Montana counties** are eligible to apply for 2021 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.

All 56 Montana counties have triggered the 2021 LFP drought criteria: **Beaverhead, Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Deer Lodge, Fallon, Fergus, Flathead, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lake, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, Lincoln, Madison, McCone, Meagher, Mineral, Missoula, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powder River, Powell, Prairie, Ravalli, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sanders, Sheridan, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Valley, Wheatland, Wibaux and Yellowstone.** Producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 31, 2022, for 2021 losses.

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

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Higher Loan Limit Now Available for USDA Guaranteed Farm Loans

USDA Extends Disaster Set-Aside for Direct Loans Until 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a higher loan limit will be available for borrowers seeking a guaranteed farm loan starting Oct. 1, 2021, from \$1.776 million to \$1.825 million.

FSA farm loans offer access to funding for a wide range of producer needs, from securing land to financing the purchase of equipment. Guaranteed loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

In fiscal year 2021, FSA saw continued strong demand for guaranteed loans. FSA obligated more than \$3.4 billion in guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans. This includes nearly \$1.2 billion for beginning farmers. The number of guaranteed borrowers has grown by 10% to more than 38,750 farmers and ranchers over the last decade. FSA expects the increasing demand for farm loans to continue into fiscal year 2022.

Disaster Set-Aside Extension

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

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

More Information

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#). Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and

other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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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:** Starting in 2020, producers will have **15 days** from when the loss is first apparent, to file a **honeybee** notice of loss instead of 30 days,. 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:

For the 2021 and subsequent crop years, 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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FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

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

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

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

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

For more information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.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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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.

- [2021 Montana Disaster Designations \(by Type\) - \(by county\)](#)
- [Emergency Loan Factsheet \(pdf\)](#)
- [FSA Farm Loan Program \(Web\)](#)

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Montana Farm and Ranch Stress Resource Clearinghouse

Montana State University Extension and an associated statewide advisory council have developed an [online clearinghouse of resources](#) for a wide range of topics related to stress and mental health. The clearinghouse was created specifically for ag producers and their families, but it contains a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning more about causes of stress, stress prevention and management, and overall mental health. To access the site, please click on this link: <https://msuextension.org/wellness/stress-management/mt-farm-stress-clearing-house/>

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Montana

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LES J RISPENS

State Committee:
RYAN LANKFORD

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

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State Conservationist:
TOM WATSON

USDA Risk Management Agency
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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.

CONTACT US:
[Farm Service Agency](#)
[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)
[Risk Management Agency](#)
[Service Center Locator](#)