



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - January 2022

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A Message from the FSA State Executive Director

I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is John Berge, and I was recently appointed by President Joe Biden to serve as the Nebraska USDA Farm Service Agency state executive director. I have both a background in agriculture (western Nebraska native of Lisco, where I grew up on a corn and wheat farm) and previous work experience with USDA. I have been the general manager of the North Platte Natural Resources District in Scottsbluff since 2013, and I began my role with Nebraska FSA last week.

I am excited to be serving alongside the FSA staff in our 71 county offices and in the state office in Lincoln. As I start to dig into the work of FSA, I want to call your attention to a couple key program items.

Two disaster programs have a **Jan. 31 deadline** for producers to turn in final application paperwork. The [Livestock Forage Program \(LFP\)](#) is a disaster assistance program for eligible producers of grazing livestock who also have grazing land that was impacted by drought in 2021. Sixteen Nebraska counties triggered for LFP in the northeast, southwest and Panhandle areas. See article below for additional details. Those same counties also triggered for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#), and USDA in 2021 extended ELAP policy to help cover the cost of transporting feed due to grazing losses related to the drought. ELAP also is available for assisting with the cost of transporting water, above normal expenses, in areas of D2 or greater on the U.S. Drought Monitor. In addition, ELAP may be available for other disaster-related losses not covered by other programs. If you live in a county impacted by drought in 2021, ask about these programs at your FSA office ahead of the deadline.

Our offices are busy taking elections and enrollments for the [Agriculture Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage](#) commodity crop safety net programs for the 2022 production season. The deadline is March 15, but please contact your county office now to begin this process. We also are working on the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#). NAP provides a financial safety net option for some crops not covered by federal crop insurance. The application closing date is March 15 for 2022 coverage on most annual fruits and vegetables, millet, oats, dry peas, hemp and a few other crops. Nebraska FSA recently outlined details regarding these programs in a webinar. To listen to a recording, [please click here](#).

That's all I've got for this month. Stay warm and talk to you in February.

--John Berge, State Executive Director

USDA Urges Producers to Submit Applications for 2021 Grazing Loss Assistance by Jan. 31, 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds ranchers and livestock producers that they may be eligible for financial assistance through the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) for 2021 grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or fire. The deadline to apply for 2021 LFP assistance is Jan. 31, 2022.

For the 2021 program year, 16 counties in Nebraska have met drought severity levels that trigger LFP eligibility. Those counties include: Banner, Box Butte, Boyd, Cedar, Chase, Dakota, Dixon, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Morrill, Scotts Bluff and Sioux. More than \$473.1 million has been paid, to date, to eligible livestock producers in 26 states and territories for 2021 LFP. For LFP, qualifying drought triggers are determined using the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#). Visit the [FSA LFP webpage](#) for a list of eligible counties and grazing crops.

LFP provides payments to eligible livestock producers and contract growers who also produce forage crops for grazing and suffered losses due to a qualifying drought or

fire during the normal grazing period for the county. Eligible livestock include alpacas, beef cattle, buffalo/bison, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, reindeer or sheep that have been or would have been grazing the eligible grazing land or pastureland during the normal grazing period.

To expedite the application process, producers are encouraged to gather and submit records documenting 2021 losses. Supporting documents may include information related to grazing leases, contract grower agreements, and more.

More Information

LFP is part of a broader suite of disaster assistance available through USDA.

The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP), which also has a Jan. 31, 2022, deadline, provides eligible producers with compensation for certain feed losses not covered by LFP as well as assistance with transporting water to livestock and feed transportation expenses.

Additional disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Farmers.gov Drought Webpage](#), [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, including LFP and ELAP, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

Deadline Approaching for Contract Offers for CRP Playa Wetlands Special Initiative

Farm Service Agency (FSA) currently is accepting Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract offers under the Kansas/Nebraska CRP Migratory Birds, Butterflies, and Pollinators State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project. Sign-up began on Dec. 13, 2021, in counties in Nebraska and Kansas where this program is available.

The Migratory Bird SAFE project is designed to improve habitat by restoring playa wetlands for migrating and wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and water birds. Playas are shallow depressions that often fill with water after rainstorms, providing habitat for migratory birds and recharging the underlying aquifer.

This project uses a competitive bid process. Landowners submit an offer to enroll their playa acres into the program for an amount they are willing to accept as an annual payment. Contracts are for periods of 10-15 years. The minimum enrollment per offer is two acres, and the maximum enrollment per offer is 160 acres. Offers can be submitted on a continuous basis, but will be reviewed periodically, ranked, and contracts offered.

Producers interested in having their contract offers reviewed and ranked in the first round should submit their applications by Feb. 18, 2022.

Contracts will only be made available for acres that are located within designated playa areas. [View this Fact Sheet](#) for information regarding counties involved in this CRP

initiative. Producers who are interested in learning more about this SAFE project are encouraged to call the county FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.

Livestock Inventory Records Important for FSA Disaster Programs

Producers are reminded to keep updated livestock inventory records. These records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster and are an important part of disaster assistance program applications, including applications for the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP).

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can assist producers who suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

To be eligible for livestock deaths, producers must submit evidence to support their losses. Some examples of records that could be used to help support a claim include: veterinary records, contemporaneous producer records, veterinary certification existing at the time of the event, balance sheets, brand inspection records, loan records, docking records, bank statements, shearing records, farm credit balance sheets, property tax records, ear tag records, trucking and/or livestock hauling records, sales and purchase receipts, inventory records used for tax purposes, private insurance documents, chattel inspections, and canceled check documentation.

To be eligible for livestock injuries, producers must submit one of the following documents that indicate an injured animal: sales receipt from a livestock auction, sale barn or other similar livestock sales facility; private insurance documents; or processing plant receipt. At a minimum, these records must include livestock kind, type, and weight, and the price for which the animal was sold.

For more information on documentation requirements associated with receiving disaster-related assistance, contact your local FSA office.

Deadline Approaching for Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program

The deadline for organic producers or those transitioning to organic production to apply for the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP) is Feb. 4,

2022. This program provides pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses. The program is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

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.

Producers Can Access FSA Farm Records with Farmers.gov Account

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can access farm records and maps online, a 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](https://farmers.gov) includes the most popular functionalities from FSA Farm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A recent 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 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.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, the request will be denied. Although there are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies,

it's important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions.

Applications cannot be approved until FSA has copies of all permits and plans. Contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

FSA Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue in 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. Contact your nearest FSA farm loan office for details. To find your nearest office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

USDA Invests \$2 Million in Risk Management Education for Historically Underserved, Small-Scale Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$2 million in cooperative agreements this year for risk management education and training programs that support historically underserved producers, small-scale farmers, and conservation practices. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is investing in organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, universities, and county cooperative extension offices, to develop training and education tools to help producers learn how to effectively manage long-term risks and challenges.

RMA works with partners to assist producers, especially historically underserved, farmers and ranchers, in effectively managing long-term risks and challenges. RMA re-established its support of risk management education in 2021, investing nearly \$1 million in nine risk management education projects. From 2002 to 2018, RMA provided annual funding for risk management education projects, supporting more than \$126 million worth of projects in historically underserved communities.

How Organizations Can Apply

A broad range of risk management training activities are eligible for funding consideration, including training on Federal crop insurance options, record keeping, financial management, non-insurance-based risk management tools, and natural disaster preparedness among others. Partners can also train farmers at all levels on risk management options that help secure local food systems.

This selection process is competitive, and RMA will prioritize projects focused on underserved, organic, and specialty crop producers. Additionally, organizations providing training related to climate change, wildfire response, local foods, and urban ag will also be given stronger consideration.

Interested organizations must apply by 5:59 pm Eastern Time on March 11 through the Results Verification System at rvs.umn.edu.

[Learn more.](#)

You're Invited: Extension Land Management, Farm Resiliency Workshops Planned Statewide

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Agricultural Profitability has scheduled a series of land management workshops to address the financial resiliency necessary for agriculture operations to sustain risk while remaining profitable.

Nebraska Extension educators will present "Building Farm and Ranch Resiliency in the Age of Financial Uncertainty" at 19 locations across the state between December and February. The workshops will cover cash rental rates, land values, leasing strategies, landlord-tenant communication, and farm and ranch succession planning. A presentation on USDA Farm Service Agency farm loans programs will be included as a part of the workshops.

Each meeting is free to attend and expected to last approximately three hours. Virtual options will be announced for some locations. Registration is required with the local county Extension office by one day prior to each workshop. More information is available on the Center for Agricultural Profitability's website, <https://cap.unl.edu/>.

The workshop schedule, with registration phone numbers (all times local), are:

- **Ashland:** Jan. 31, 1-4 p.m. (Round the Bend, 30801 E. Park Highway), 402-267-2205
- **Broken Bow:** Feb. 1, 1-4 p.m. (Custer County Fairgrounds, 4-H Building, 44100 Memorial Drive), 308-872-6831
- **Kearney:** Feb. 2, 9 a.m.-noon (Buffalo County Extension Office, 1400 E. 34th St.), 308-236-1235
- **McCook:** Feb. 2, 1-4 p.m. (Red Willow County Fairgrounds, 4-H Building, W. 5th St.), 308-268-3105

- **Grant:** Feb. 3, 9 a.m.-noon (Perkins County Extension Office, 6025 Road 329), 308-352-4340
- **Fullerton:** Feb. 7, 1-4 p.m. (Nance County Fairgrounds, 406 N. Ida), 308-536-2691
- **Geneva:** Feb. 8, 9 a.m.-noon (Fillmore County Fairgrounds, Ag Hall), 402-759-3712.

Funding Available for Farmers to Establish Soil Health Demonstration Projects

NRCS is continuing an effort to enhance the adoption of soil health practices through the establishment of Soil Health Management Demonstration Projects. Landowners interested in applying for funding to establish a soil health demonstration project should submit their application to NRCS by Feb. 18, 2022.

According to NRCS, the purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate and validate soil health management systems applicable across Nebraska. The goal is to support the adoption and continued application of the NRCS Soil Health Principles:

- Keep the soil covered
- Limit soil disturbance
- Diversity (crops and livestock)
- Have living plants growing in the soil as much of the year as possible

NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) will be used to fund this initiative. Producers selected can receive EQIP funding for 3-5 years. Funding will compensate producers for conducting strip trials of cover crops vs. no cover crops within a diverse crop rotation using no-till planting and other soil health management techniques. Producers will receive \$1,800 per treatment comparison unit, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per year, to conduct these strip trials, develop case studies, and host field days.

For more information on Soil Health Management Demonstration Projects, contact NRCS at [your local USDA Service Center](#).

January FSA Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 2.125%

Microloan Operating: 2.125%

Farm Ownership: 3%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.125%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 0.875%

5-year term: 1.250%

7-year term: 1.375%
10-year term: 1.5%
12-year term: 1.625%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 1.25%

Dates to Remember

January 31, 2022 – FSA deadline for applications for 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program assistance for eligible producers in eligible counties

January 31, 2022 – FSA deadline for applications for 2021 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program assistance for eligible producers in eligible counties

February 4, 2022 – FSA application deadline for Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP)

February 18, 2022 – FSA deadline for first ranking period for applications to the CRP Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement project; eligible in 42 Nebraska counties

February 18, 2022 – FSA deadline for applications to the Dairy Margin Coverage Program for 2022 production

February 18, 2022 – NRCS application deadline for Soil Health Demonstration Projects

February 21, 2022 - USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

February 25, 2022 – FSA deadline for applications to the Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP)

March 15, 2022 – FSA Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC) program deadline for elections and enrollment for 2022 production season

March 15, 2022 – ***FSA application closing date for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for 2022 production season for most annual fruits and vegetables, millet, oats, forage sorghum, dry peas, hemp

****Please note the above NAP calendar references may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.*



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