



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - November 2022

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A Message from the FSA State Executive Director

I want to start this month's message by wishing you, our FSA farmer and rancher customers, a Happy Thanksgiving. We are thankful for all you do to provide the food that we will enjoy during this upcoming season of celebrations.

From a business standpoint, Farm Service Agency offices will be closed for Thanksgiving so our staff can enjoy a well-deserved day off. In line with the holiday, I will say I am thankful for our employees, who work hard to provide FSA services to all our customers. I

hope you can agree they deserve our “thanks” and that you will share such sentiment with them next time you are in the office.

While the holidays can be a distraction, I encourage you to pay attention to several upcoming deadlines, as outlined below in the story on Dates to Remember. For example, deadlines are fast approaching to turn in your FSA County Committee election ballot, and for you dairy producers, to enroll in the Dairy Margin Coverage Program for 2023.

You'll also find below a story that highlights FSA's new, interactive [Loan Assistance Tool](#). I am excited about how this new tool can help customers get a baseline feel for their loan eligibility, determine which loans are right for them, and then get help completing application forms. Check it out, and then contact your USDA Service Center farm loan team for next steps to secure operating or ownership financing from FSA.

In closing, I want to note that if you haven't already, you'll soon be receiving notification that it is now time to complete the 2022 Census of Ag, which is conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) every five years. While some may view this as a chore, it is an important one, as the information gathered from the Census is aggregated and then collectively used to show the nation the value and importance of what you do in agriculture. It also is used by policy-makers as part of their legislative and regulatory decision-making process. Read more in the story below, and then please take the time to complete your Census information.

That's all for this month. Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.

--John Berge

Voting Open for FSA County Committee Elections

Voting is now open for the USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) county committees across the state.

It is important that every eligible producer participate in these elections because FSA county committees are a link between the agricultural community and the USDA.

County committee members are a critical component of FSA operations. Committees should be comprised of members who reflect the diversity of producers involved in production agriculture in each county. This means that producers representing underserved groups or communities should be on the committee to speak on behalf of their constituency. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources. Other minority groups including Native American and Alaska Natives; persons under the poverty level, and persons that have disabilities are also considered underserved.

County committee election ballots were mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 7, 2022. The last day to return completed ballots to the nearest USDA Service Center, or have them postmarked by, is Dec. 5, 2022.



For more information on eligibility to serve on FSA county committees, visit: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

USDA Announces Details for Census of Agriculture

America's farmers and ranchers 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) has started the collection of information for the 2022 Census of Agriculture across the 50 states and Puerto Rico.

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 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](#).

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 is under way 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.

More Information

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

Producers with NAP Coverage Reminded to File Application for Payment on Disaster-Impacted Grazing Acres

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

Nebraska Farm Service Agency is reminding producers who purchased NAP coverage on grazing acres for the 2022 production season that they must contact their county FSA office to file an application for payment if they believe they suffered a loss on those covered acres.

For most NAP-covered crops, producers must notify their FSA office of losses by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment" within specified timelines dependent on the type of covered crop. For grazing acres covered by NAP, the Part B notice of loss is no longer required. **However, to receive benefits, you must contact your county FSA office** and complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be done within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. For grazing acres, this deadline is April 13, 2023, but producers are encouraged to begin the application for payment process now.

The county FSA office will discuss with the producer the NAP appraisal information available for grazing acres within the county.

For more information on NAP, visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Apply Now for Assistance with On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers

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.

Specialty crop operations can apply now through January 31, 2023, for assistance for eligible expenses related to a 2022 food safety certificate issued on or after June 21, 2022. 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.

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. The link to a recorded webinar that outlines program parameters also can be found on the website.

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 for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity, 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 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.

FSA Offers Guaranteed Loan Option for Working with Local Lenders

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$2,037,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the

loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years, and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

For more information on guaranteed loans, contact your county Farm Service Agency office or visit fsa.usda.gov.

FSA Farm Storage Facility Loans Provide Direct Financing Option

Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, contact your county Farm Service Agency office or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

FSA November Loan Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 4.375%

Microloan Operating: 4.375%

Farm Ownership: 4.5%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.750%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 4.250%

5-year term: 4.125%

7-year term: 4%

10-year term: 3.875%

12-year term: 3.875%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 5.250%

Celebrate Soil Health During No-Till November



No-till farming is a cornerstone soil health conservation practice, which also promotes water quality while saving farmers time and money. It is also a key climate smart practice, that helps store more carbon in the soil

One of the first soil health principles is “Do Not Disturb.” No Till November is a fun way to remind farmers about the important relationship between reduced tillage and soil health.

Improving soil health increases soil biological activity, which provides erosion control, nutrient benefits, and can simulate tillage. Watch this video to learn more about no-till farming: <https://youtu.be/DBYeb66dN80>.

Assistance Available for Nebraska Farmers, Ranchers Impacted by Wildfire

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has funding available to assist agricultural producers whose land was impacted by recent wildfires. Landowners have until May 31, 2023, to apply.

Through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) funding is available to help producers plan and implement conservation practices on farms and ranches impacted by natural disasters. EQIP funding is available to assist in this wildfire recovery effort by planting cover crops on impacted cropland and to defer grazing on rangeland.

The application signup for this wildfire assistance is happening now and will run through **May 31, 2023**. Applications will be assessed, and even though some lands may be eligible for assistance, it is not guaranteed that all acres will receive financial assistance due to limited funding.

Interested landowners and operators should contact their [local NRCS office](#) in the USDA Service Center for applications and more information.

Dates to Remember

Nov. 21, 2022 – *** FSA NAP application closing deadline for coverage for aronia berries and grapes in the 2023 production season

Nov. 24, 2022 – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

Dec. 5, 2022 – Deadline to return FSA County Committee election ballots (or have postmarked)

Dec. 9, 2022 – FSA deadline for application to the Dairy Margin Coverage Program for

2023

Jan. 2, 2023 – FSA acreage certification deadline for honey

Jan. 30, 2023 – FSA deadline for applications for Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) benefits for 2022 losses

Jan. 31, 2023 – FSA deadline for producers to apply for an LDP for wool and unshorn pelts

****Please note any above NAP calendar reference 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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