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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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New Hampshire FSA Newsletter

New Hampshire Farm Service Agency

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Farmers and Ranchers in NH Can Now Apply for Financial Assistance through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Online Tools and Toll-Free Number Available to Assist Producers

Agricultural producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. The agency set up a call center in order to simplify how they serve new customers across the nation.

State Executive Director:

Jeffrey Holmes

State Committee:

Kathy Sherman, Chair

Madison Hardy

Gary LeClair

Scott Mason

Kirk Scamman

Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

We also want to remind producers that the program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply.

To find contact information for your local office go to

www.fsa.usda.gov/nh

In order to do this, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from farmers.gov/cfap. Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments.

Additionally, producers in search of one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. This is a good first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

Applying for Assistance

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office. Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to print off a pre-filled CFAP application, sign, and submit to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred method. Find contact information for your local office at farmers.gov/cfap.

Documentation to support the producer's application and certification may be requested after the application is filed. FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

Additional Commodities

USDA is also establishing a process for the public to identify additional commodities for potential inclusion in CFAP. Specifically, USDA is looking for data on agricultural commodities, that are not currently eligible for CFAP, that the public believes to have either:

1. suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, or
3. not left the farm or remained unharvested as mature crops.

More information about this process is available on farmers.gov/cfap.

More Information

To find the latest information on CFAP, visit farmers.gov/cfap or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Consideration of Additional Commodities for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Agricultural producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. CFAP provides vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

Eligible commodities include:

- **Non-specialty Crops:** malting barley, canola, corn, upland cotton, millet, oats, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, durum wheat, and hard red spring wheat
- **Wool**

- **Livestock:** cattle, hogs, and sheep (lambs and yearlings only)
- **Dairy**
- **Specialty Crops**
 - **Fruits:** apples, avocados, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes, watermelons
 - **Vegetables:** artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, dry onions, green onions, peppers, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, taro
 - **Nuts:** almonds, pecans, walnuts
 - **Other:** beans, mushrooms

USDA has established a process for the public to identify additional commodities for potential inclusion in CFAP. Specifically, USDA is looking for data on agricultural commodities, that are not currently eligible for CFAP, that the public believes to have either:

1. suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, or
3. not left the farm or remained unharvested as mature crops.

USDA is particularly interested in the obtaining information with respect to the following specific categories of agricultural commodities:

- Nursery Products
- Aquaculture Products
- Cut Flowers

Comments may be submitted through either of the following methods by June 22, 2020:

- **Federal Rulemaking Portal** – Go to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) and search for [Docket ID FSA-2020-0004](#). Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- **Mail** – Director, SND, FSA, US Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 0522, Washington, DC 20250-0522.

Learn more by watching our [video on the Notice of Funding Availability](#) or by visiting farmers.gov/cfap.

FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

Set-Aside Delays Loan Payments for Borrowers

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

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 aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

USDA Reports Record Enrollment in Key Farm Safety-Net Programs

Producers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year, which is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a 5-year average. USDA also reminds producers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.

Producers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office. Producers must enroll by June 30 and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by September 30.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the 2019 crop year ARC and PLC programs to increased producer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill and to an increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres. Enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

For more information on ARC and PLC, download the [program fact sheet](#) or the [2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet](#). Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. To locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

FSA Reminds Producers of Ongoing Disaster Assistance Program Signup

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary

county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus, and more information on WHIP+ can be found at farmers.gov/whip-plus.

USDA Reminds NH Producers to Complete Crop Acreage Reports

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices in NH are currently open to phone and virtual appointments only but can still work with producers on timely filing crop acreage reports. FSA staff can provide assistance over the phone, by email and through virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in State:

July 15, 2020	annuals, forage crops, and most perennials
September 30, 2020	value loss crops (Christmas trees, aquaculture, and floriculture)
January 2, 2021	honey
January 15, 2021	apples and peaches
February 15, 2021	maple sap
May 31, 2021	nursery

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers must file an accurate crop acreage report by the applicable deadline. FSA staff is still able to assist producers in completing acreage reports, including providing maps.

FSA county offices in NH can provide maps to producers through mail or email with instructions for completing the maps. After planting is complete, producers should return completed maps and the acreage reporting sheet by mail or email by the applicable deadline.

FSA offices can use Microsoft Teams software to virtually meet with producers to review maps and documents for certification. Producers who want to schedule a virtual appointment can download the Microsoft Teams app on their smart phones and call the FSA office for an appointment. You can also use Microsoft Teams from your personal computer without downloading software.

After completed maps and all acreage reporting information is received, FSA will make software updates and mail or email producers the completed *Report of Acreage* form (FSA-578) to sign. Producers must return the signed form certifying their acreage report to the FSA office through mail or email by the applicable deadline.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins

.If you have applied for organic certification and do not receive it before the acreage reporting deadline, you may provide the necessary documentation to FSA immediately upon receipt from the certifying agent.

For questions, please contact your local FSA office. To locate your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database. If you have any unreported changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file they need to be reported to our office. Changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, need to be reported to our office as well. Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

If you have any updates or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, have a New Option to Gain Access to Land

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer's credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score.

- Make sure to pay bills on time. Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt.

- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts. FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit fsa.usda.gov.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend meetings should contact the New Hampshire State Office at 603-224-7941 or your local County Office.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).