



Farm Service Agency Electronic News Service

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New Jersey State FSA Newsletter

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USDA is Providing Additional Direct Assistance to Farmers Impacted by the Coronavirus

USDA announced up to an additional \$14 billion for agricultural producers who continue to face market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19. Signup for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2) will begin September 21 and run through December 11, 2020.

Background:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will use funds being made available from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act and CARES Act to support row crops, livestock, specialty crops, dairy, aquaculture and many additional commodities. USDA has incorporated improvements in CFAP 2 based from stakeholder engagement and public feedback to better meet the needs of impacted farmers and ranchers.

Producers can apply for CFAP 2 at USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices. This program provides financial assistance that gives producers the ability to absorb increased marketing costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Producers will be compensated for ongoing market disruptions and assisted with the associated marketing costs.

CFAP 2 payments will be made for three categories of commodities – Price Trigger Commodities, Flat-rate Crops and Sales Commodities.

Price Trigger Commodities Price trigger commodities are major commodities that meet a minimum 5-percent price decline over a specified period of time. Eligible price trigger crops include barley, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, upland cotton, and all classes of wheat. Payments will be based on 2020 planted acres of the crop, excluding prevented planting and experimental acres. Payments for price trigger crops will be the greater of: 1) the eligible acres multiplied by a payment rate of \$15 per acre; or 2) the eligible acres multiplied by a nationwide crop marketing percentage, multiplied by a crop-specific payment rate, and then by the producer's weighted 2020 Actual Production History (APH) approved yield. If the APH is not available, 85 percent of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County Option (ARC-CO) benchmark yield for that crop will be used.

For broilers and eggs, payments will be based on 75 percent of the producers' 2019 production.

Dairy (cow's milk) payments will be based on actual milk production from April 1 to Aug. 31, 2020. The milk production for Sept. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2020, will be estimated by FSA.

Eligible beef cattle, hogs and pigs, and lambs and sheep payments will be based on the maximum owned inventory of eligible livestock, excluding breeding stock, on a date selected by the producer, between Apr. 16, 2020, and Aug. 31, 2020.

Flat-rate Crops Crops that either do not meet the 5-percent price decline trigger or do not have data available to calculate a price change will have payments calculated based on eligible 2020 acres multiplied by \$15 per acre. These crops include alfalfa, extra long staple (ELS) cotton, oats, peanuts, rice, hemp, millet, mustard, safflower, sesame, triticale, rapeseed, and several others.

Sales Commodities Sales commodities include specialty crops; aquaculture; nursery crops and floriculture; other commodities not included in the price trigger and flat-rate categories, including tobacco; goat milk; mink (including pelts); mohair; wool; and other livestock (excluding breeding stock) not included under the price trigger category that were grown for food, fiber, fur, or feathers. Payment calculations will use a sales-based approach, where producers are paid based on five payment gradations associated with their 2019 sales.

Additional commodities are eligible in CFAP 2 that weren't eligible in the first iteration of the program. If your agricultural operation has been impacted by the pandemic since April 2020, we encourage you to apply for CFAP 2. A complete list of eligible commodities, payment rates and calculations can be found on farmers.gov/cfap.

Eligibility There is a payment limitation of \$250,000 per person or entity for all commodities combined. Applicants who are corporations, limited liability companies, limited partnerships may qualify for additional payment limits when members actively provide personal labor or personal management for the farming operation. In addition, this special payment limitation provision has been expanded to include trusts and estates for both CFAP 1 and 2.

Producers will also have to certify they meet the Adjusted Gross Income limitation of \$900,000 unless at least 75 percent or more of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. Producers must also be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.

Applying for Assistance Producers can apply for assistance beginning Sept. 21, 2020. Applications will be accepted through Dec. 11, 2020.

Additional information and application forms can be found at farmers.gov/cfap. Documentation to support the producer's application and certification may be requested. All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap/apply. For existing FSA customers, including those who participated in CFAP 1, many documents are likely already on file. Producers should check with FSA county office to see if any of the forms need to be updated.

Customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages with the team at the FSA county office.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-

screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in the office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Newark's West Ward receives an infusion of hope from NRCS

By [Lauren Finnegan](#), Public Affairs Specialist

Click here to view the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcfeE8AEP5o>

NEWARK, N.J.-- A three-year-old boy weighed down by his oversize backpack and clutching the hand of his father, scurries down the ramp in front of his preschool. To his right he sees a sidewalk covered in broken glass, abandoned fast-food wrappers, and a pile of tattered mattresses in front of a long-ago abandoned home. But to his left, he's able to take in the giant bumblebees that fly among a swirl of reds, blues, and yellows on the once peeling concrete walls that surround the Garden of Hope, an urban garden tucked within Newark's West Ward.

The garden, one of a plethora that have popped up since the city started their Adopt-a-Lot program in 2004, was started by Newark Science and Sustainability Founder and Managing Director, Tobias Fox. Fox's colleague, Jacquleen Bido, came across the trash-strewn vacant lot in 2015 and thought it would be the perfect place to begin the community project.

"One day as I'm standing in the lot, observing the space, I noticed a group of children exiting the adjacent building ... Social psychology teaches us that environment has a direct influence on our behavior, and I imagined what effect the conditions of the neighborhood -- despair, hopelessness, abandonment, and criminal activity -- were having on the children. It was at that moment I decided that I wanted to take on the challenge of transforming the space," Fox said.

After leasing the lot from the city, the garden morphed, not only into a place of beauty, but a community meeting place where residents came to feed their body, minds and souls.

"The Garden of Hope is a place where strangers become friends who work together to build a sustainable tomorrow. When I think of the impact we have on the Newark community I believe it is seen through our ability to engage people of all ages in playing an active role in living sustainably," Bido said.

This spring, after serving the community for the last five years, the garden began its transformation into a year-round sustainable urban farm, complete with a hydroponic greenhouse, commercial kitchen, and farm stand.

The project is slated for completion in December 2020 but may never have gotten off the ground if not for the work of New Jersey Natural Resource Conservation Service soil scientist, Edwin Muniz, who provided a soil screening assessment for Fox in 2015.

Muniz first visited the site after Jamie Bruno, founder and program director of Urban Agriculture Cooperative, reached out to NRCS for assistance.

"I learned about the NRCS soil testing at a conference I went to in 2015, and immediately saw value for the urban agricultural community. They offer a free service with highly detailed testing, that I saw as an incredible empowerment tool. As a community gardener or urban farmer who tries to select and make choices on their lot, that information will enable them to make the right choices for themselves and their community," Bruno said.

NRCS offers free soil assessments to urban communities through their "Technical Assistance for Community Gardens," program. The evaluation provides a trace metal content examination, general site and soil characterization, and information on soil health indices.

This past year when Fox decided to transition from a leaseholder to landholder and purchase the lot to make his dream of an urban farm possible, the owner of several buildings in the area, including those adjacent to the garden, came to the public hearing to approve the farm, in opposition.

"When I saw him, I really thought he was there in favor of our project. But he came to try and persuade the city to not allow us to develop this site... One of his defenses was that the soil was heavily contaminated. However, he didn't have proof, so I had to show documentation that the soil wasn't contaminated, and that was based on the soil screening done by NRCS," Fox said.

Since NRCS started providing these services in 2011, about 145 community gardens have been served. The major focus of the tests, especially in urban settings is the amount of lead and arsenic present. Depending on the amount, NRCS can recommend strategies to limit exposure, including maintaining an optimum pH level to improve available nutrients which will reduce the pathway for trace metal uptake, covering exposed soil with mulch to increase organic matter, and planting in raised garden beds.

"Our purpose is to help the community grow food in a safe environment. It's difficult for city residents to find fresh products nearby, and it's really rewarding to be able to provide assistance to them," Muniz said.

As for Fox, he's cautiously optimistic about the future for the neighborhood -- one that has seen a lot of violence, including four murders in the last five years.

"My hope is that this redevelopment project... will help prevent the next murder from happening. All the neglect that takes place here is a magnet for crime, and we're hoping we can start changing that outlook."

USDA Reminds New Jersey Farmers of the November 15 Acreage Reporting Deadline

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices in New Jersey 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 New Jersey:

- **Sept 30** - Value Loss Crop (i.e. Aquaculture, Christmas trees, Flowers, Sod)
- **Nov 15** - Fall Planted Small Grains
- **Jan 2** - Honey

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

FSA county offices in New Jersey will be happy to provide maps to producers through mail, email or local pick-up with instructions for completing the maps. After planting is complete, producers should return completed maps and the acreage reporting sheet as directed by their local office.

FSA offices are using 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 provide 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 by the reporting deadline above.

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.

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

Using FSA Direct Farm Ownership Loans for Construction

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [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.

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.

Direct Farm Ownership Loans can be used to construct, purchase or improve farm dwellings, service buildings or other facilities, and to make improvements essential to an operation.

Applicants must provide FSA with an estimate of the total cost of all planned development that completely describe the work, prior to loan approval and must show proof of sufficient funds to pay for the total cost of all planned development at or before loan closing. In some instances, applicants may be asked to provide certified plans, specifications or contract documents. The applicant cannot incur any debts for materials or labor or make any expenditures for development purposes prior to loan closing with the expectation of being reimbursed from FSA funds.

Construction and development work may be performed either by the contract method or the borrower method. Under the contract method, construction and development contractors perform work according to a written contract with the applicant or borrower. If applying for a direct loan to finance a construction project, the applicant must obtain a surety bond that guarantees both payment and performance in the amount of the construction contract from a construction contractor.

A surety bond is required when a contract exceeds \$100,000. An authorized agency official determines that a surety bond appears advisable to protect the borrower against default of the contractor or a contract provides for partial payments in excess of the amount of 60 percent of the value of the work in place.

Under the borrower method, the applicant or borrower will perform the construction and development work. The borrower method may only be used when the authorized agency official determines, based on information from the applicant, that the applicant possesses or arranges to obtain the necessary skill and managerial ability to complete the work satisfactorily and that such work will not interfere with the applicant's farming operation or work schedule.

Potential applicants should visit with FSA early in the initial project planning process to ensure environmental compliance.

For more eligibility requirements and information about FSA Loan programs, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Supports U.S. Seafood Industry Impacted by Retaliatory Tariffs

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide approximately \$530 million to support the U.S. seafood industry and fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments. The funding will be provided through the Seafood Trade Relief Program and funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Background:

The Seafood Trade Relief Program funding will support the following seafood types:

- Atka mackerel
- Crab (Dungeness, King, Snow, Southern Tanner)
- Flounder
- Geoduck
- Goosefish
- Herrings
- Lobster
- Pacific Cod
- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Pollock
- Sablefish
- Salmon
- Sole
- Squid
- Tuna
- Turbot

Fishermen can sign-up for relief through the program from September 14, 2020 to December 14, 2020. Fishermen should apply through their local USDA Service Center. To find your local Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator. The application can be found at www.farmers.gov/seafood.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in the office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Offers Assistance Due to Weather, Pest, and Disease Damage

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experienced losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2020 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.

TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster, plus an adjustment for normal mortality. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to

trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 1,000 acres annually.

Click here to read the [TAP Fact Sheet](#)

USDA Adds Flexibilities for Crop Insurance

You can continue to work with your Approved Insurance Providers on policies, claims, and agreements. If you have crop insurance questions or other needs, you should continue to contact your insurance agents about conducting business by telephone or email.

USDA's Risk Management Agency is working with those insurance providers to provide additional flexibilities in response to COVID-19, including:

- Enabling producers to send notifications and reports electronically
- Extending the date for production reports
- Providing additional time and deferring interest on premium and other payments
- Authorizing replant self-certification
- Waiving the witness signature requirement for approval of Assignments of Indemnity
- Allowing dumped milk to be counted as milk marketings for the Dairy Revenue Production (DRP) or actual marketings for the Livestock Gross Margin for Dairy (LGM-Dairy) programs
- Allowing phone and electronic transactions for 2021 crop year sales and reporting dates, including options and endorsements
- Extending the deadline for some perennial crop Pre-Acceptance Inspection Reports (PAIRs)
- Waiving the 2021 crop year inspection requirements for the Nursery and Nursery Value Select (NVS) programs in certain cases
- Authorizing AIPs to allow organic producers to report acreage as certified organic, or transitioning to organic, for the 2020 crop year if they can show they have requested a written certification from a certifying agent by their policy's acreage reporting date.

For more in-depth information on these flexibilities, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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).