USDA Announces ‘Pandemic Assistance for Producers’

USDA will reopen sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has committed at least $2.5 million to improve outreach for CFAP 2 and will establish partnerships with organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

The payments announced today (under Part 1, below) will go out under the existing CFAP rules; however, future opportunities for USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers will be reviewed for verified need according to the rulemaking process. USDA will look to make rulemaking more consistent with the Farm Bill. Moving forward, USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers will utilize existing programs, such as the Local Agricultural Marketing Program, Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach, and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and others to enhance educational and market opportunities for agricultural producers.

Part 1: Investing $6 Billion to Expand Help & Assistance to More Producers

USDA will dedicate at least $6 billion to develop a number of new programs or modify existing programs using discretionary funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act and other coronavirus funding that went unspent by the previous administration. Where rulemaking is required, it will commence this spring. These efforts will include assistance for:

- Dairy farmers through the Dairy Donation Program or other means:
- Timely payments for crop and animal income consumers
- Assistance for specialty crops, beginning farmers, local, urban and organic farms;
- Costs for organic certification or to continue or add conservation activities
- Other possible expansion and corrections to CFAP that were not part of today’s announcement such as to support dairy or livestock producers;
- Timber harvesting and hauling;
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other protective measures for food and farm workers and specialty crop and seafood processors, producers and distributors;
- Improving the resilience of the food supply chain, including assistance to meat and poultry operations to facilitate interstate shipment;
- Developing infrastructure to support food donation and distribution of perishable commodities, including food donation and distribution through farm-to-school, restaurants or other community organizations; and
- Reducing food waste.

Part 2: Adding $500 Million of New Funding to Existing Programs

USDA expects to begin investing approximately $500 million in expedited assistance through several existing programs this spring, with most by April 30. This new assistance includes:

- $100 million in additional funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), which enhances the competitiveness of fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops.
- $75 million in additional funding for the Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach program, administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, which encourages and assists socially disadvantaged, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers in the ownership and operation of farms and ranches.
- $100 million in additional funding for the Local Agricultural Marketing Program, administered by the AMS and Rural Development, which supports the development, coordination and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises and value-added agricultural products.
- $75 million in additional funding for the Gua Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, administered by the NIFA, which provides funding opportunities to conduct and evaluate projects providing incentives to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers.
- $20 million for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to improve and maintain animal disease prevention and response capacity; the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.
• $20 million for the Agricultural Research Service to work collaboratively with Texas A&M on the critical intersection between responsive agriculture, food production, and human nutrition and health.
• $28 million for NIFA to provide grants to state departments of agriculture to expand or sustain existing farm stress assistance programs.
• Approximately $5 billion in supplemental payments to domestic users of upland and extra-long staple cotton based on a formula set in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 that USDA plans to deliver through the Economic Adjustment Assistance for Textile Mills program.

Part 3: Carrying Out Formula Payments under CFAP 1, CFAP 2, CFAP AA

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, enacted December 2020 requires FSA to make certain payments to producers according to a mandated formula. USDA is now expanding these provisions because there is no discretion involved in interpreting such directives, they are self-executing.

• An increase in CFAP 1 payment rates for cattle. Cattle producers with approved CFAP 1 applications will automatically receive these payments beginning in April. Information on additional payment rates for cattle can be found on farmers.gov. Eligible producers do not need to submit additional applications, since payments are based on previously approved CFAP 1 applications. USDA estimates additional payments of more than $1.1 billion to more than 410,000 producers, according to the mandated formula.

• Additional CFAP assistance of $20 per acre for producers of eligible crops identified as CFAP 2 flat-rate or price-trigger crops beginning in 2021. Eligible crops include alfalfa, cotton, hemp, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat, among other crops: FSA will automatically issue payments to eligible producers based on the eligible acreages included on their CFAP 2 applications. Eligible producers do not need to submit a new CFAP 2 application. For a list of all eligible row crops, visit farmers.gov. USDA estimates additional payments of more than $4.5 billion to more than 560,000 producers, according to the mandated formula.

USDA will finalize routine decisions and make additional payments to producers using the additional payments formulas and begin processing payments for certain applications filed as part of the CFAP Additional Assistance program in the following categories:

- Applications file for pullets and turkeys sold:
  - A formula connection for new or grower applications to allow producers with a non-Actual Production History (APH) insurance policy to use 100% of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County (ARC-County) benchmark yield on the calculation.
  - Sales commodity applications revised to include insurance indemnities, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, and Wildlife and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus payments, as required by statute.
  - Additional funding for swine producers and contract growers under CFAP 2.
  - Additional Assistance remain on hold and are likely to require modifications to the regulations and the broader evaluation and future actions. However, FSA will continue to accept applications from interested producers.

Part 4: Reopening CFAP 2 Sign-Up to Improve Access & Outreach to Underserved Producers

As noted above, USDA will re-open sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021.

- FSA has committed at least $2.5 million to establish partnerships and direct outreach efforts intended to improve access to CFAP 2 and will cooperate with grassroots organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

Please stay tuned for additional information and announcements under the USDA Pandemic Assistance to Producers (PAP) program, which will help to expand the USDA’s equitable outreach and financial assistance to producers and farming operations during the COVID-19 national emergency. Please visit www.farmers.gov for more information on the details of today’s announcement.

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, ensuring access to 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 and environmental sustainability by remote identifying barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

USDA Offers Resources for New Jersey Maple Producers

Available Resources Support Funding, Conservation and Natural Disaster Recovery for Maple Operations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers technical expertise and financial assistance to help New Jersey maple producers fund their operations, conserve natural resources and recover from natural disasters. Many producers are encouraged to visit their local USDA Service Center to learn about resources to support their operations both during the harvest season and throughout the year.

“Welcome to this busy time for our maple producers,” said Lindsay Caragher, Acting State Executive Director for USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) in New Jersey. “Whether you’ve been a producer in our state for years or are just getting started, we encourage you to contact your local USDA Service Center for help and support. Our local offices offer one-on-one technical assistance and financial support to help strengthen your operation.”

Funding Opportunities for Maple Producers

FSA offers funding opportunities to help maple producers start, expand and maintain their operations.

FSA’s Farm Storage Facility Loan Program provides low-interest financing so producers can build or upgrade facilities to store maple commodities. Maple sap and maple syrup are both eligible commodities for storage.

Maple producers are encouraged to visit farmers.gov or contact the FSA office at your local USDA Service Center to learn more about USDA funding opportunities. Through our Farm Loan Recovery Tool, you can answer five quick questions to learn about farm loans that might be right for you.

Conservation Resources for Maple Producers

NRCS offers programs and services that benefit New Jersey maple producers while conserving natural resources. Maple producers are encouraged to contact the NRCS office at your local USDA Service Center for more information. NRCS provides financial and technical support to farmers and landowners to help producers conserve natural resources, protect the environment, minimize pollution and improve the critical intersection between responsive agriculture, food production, and human nutrition and health.

FSA offers assistance for New Jersey maple producers who have been impacted by natural disasters.

The Recovery Support for Maple Producers

FSA and USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) offer programs to help maple producers prepare for and recover from the impacts of natural disasters.

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Federal crop insurance is administered through RMA to provide a robust and reliable farm safety net, regardless of the size and scope of natural disasters. RMA’s Whole-Farm Revenue Protection covers all commodities on the farm, including maple, under one insurance policy. Through the Tree Assistance Program, FSA offers financial assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost due to natural disasters. This includes eligible maple trees from which an annual crop is produced for commercial purposes. Maple producers are encouraged to visit farmers.gov/recover or contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more about USDA resources to manage risk and recover from natural disasters. USDA encourages completion of Cash Rents and Leases Survey You may have received a Cash Rents and Leases survey from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). This survey provides the basis for estimates of the current year’s cash rents paid for irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, and permanent pasture. Please complete your Cash Rents and Leases survey by June 21. This survey can be completed and returned by mail, over the phone, or at accounts.usda.gov. Information from this survey is used in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as an alternative soil rental rate prior to finalizing new rates each year. Survey responses from as many localities as possible help calculate more accurate rental rates. Completion of the survey ensures cash rental rates accurately represent your locality. Survey results will also give you a useful tool in negotiating your rental agreements, and financial planning for your agricultural operation. In accordance with federal law, survey responses are kept confidential. Survey results will be available in aggregate form only to ensure that no individual producer or operation can be identified. NASS will publish the survey results on August 27 at quickstats.nass.usda.gov. If you have any questions about this survey, please call 888-424-7828, or visit: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Cash_Rents_by_County/index.php.

Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be successful. FSA staff will provide guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower’s graduation to commercial credit. While it is FSA’s commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower’s responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

If a farm loan borrower can’t make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options. For more information on FSA farm loan programs visit fsa.usda.gov.