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Share Your Planting Season Experience for #Plant2021

Spring has sprung and it’s planting time! For many, 2020 was the first year they’d ever seen an empty shelf at the grocery store. And for the first time, many people realized how much they take farming and the people who make it possible for granted. Let’s change that. Let Farmers.gov showcase your work by participating in the #Plant2021 campaign. We’ll share your stories on social media and our nationwide storymap. Here’s how.

After Identifying Gaps in Previous Aid, USDA Announces ‘Pandemic Assistance for Producers’ to Distribute Resources More Equitably

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is establishing new programs and efforts to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions. The new initiative—USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers—will reach a broader set of producers than in previous COVID-19 aid programs.

USDA is dedicating at least $6 billion toward the new programs. The Department will also develop rules for new programs that will put a greater emphasis on outreach to small and socially disadvantaged producers, specialty crop and organic producers, timber harvesters, as well as provide support for the food supply chain and producers of renewable fuel, among others. Existing programs like the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) will fall within the new initiative and, where statutory authority allows, will be refined to better address the needs of producers.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers was needed, said Vilsack, after a review of previous COVID-19 assistance programs targeting farmers identified a number of gaps and disparities in how assistance was distributed as well as inadequate outreach to underserved producers and smaller and medium operations.

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.
USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers – 4 Parts

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 proposals using discretionary funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act and other coronavirus funding that went unspent by the previous administration.

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.

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 expediting these provisions because there is no discretion involved in interpreting such directives, they are self-enacting.

- 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 the additional payment rates for cattle can be found on farmers.gov/cfap. Eligible producers do not need to submit new applications, since payments are based on previously approved CFAP 1 application. 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 April. This includes alfalfa, corn, cotton, hemp, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat, among other crops. FSA will automatically issue payments to eligible price trigger and flat-rate crop producers based on the eligible acres 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/cfap. 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 minor formula adjustments on applications and begin processing payments for certain applications filed as part of the CFAP Additional Assistance program in the following categories:
  - Applications filed for pullets and turfgrass sod;
  - A formula correction for row-crop producer applications to allow producers with a non-Actual Production History (APH) insurance policy to use 100% of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County Option (ARC-CO) benchmark yield in the calculation;
  - Sales commodity applications revised to include insurance indemnities, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments, and Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus payments, as required by statute; and
  - Additional payments for swine producers and contract growers under CFAP Additional Assistance remain on hold and are likely to require modifications to the regulation as part of the broader evaluation and future assistance; 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 of 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 outreach for 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 visit www.farmers.gov for additional information and announcements under the USDA Pandemic Assistance to Producers initiative, which will help to expand and more equitably distribute financial assistance to producers and farming operations during the COVID-19 national emergency.
Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team in North Carolina is already working on operating loans for spring 2021 and asks potential borrowers to submit their requests early so they can be timely processed. The farm loan team can help determine which loan programs are best for applicants.

FSA offers a wide range of low-interest loans that can meet the financial needs of any farm operation for just about any purpose. The traditional farm operating and farm ownership loans can help large and small farm operations take advantage of early purchasing discounts for spring inputs as well expenses throughout the year.

Microloans are a simplified loan program that will provide up to $50,000 for both Farm Ownership and Operating Microloans to eligible applicants. These loans, targeted for smaller and non-traditional operations, can be used for operating expenses, starting a new operation, purchasing equipment, and other needs associated with a farming operation. Loans to beginning farmers and members of underserved groups are a priority.

Other types of loans available include:

Marketing Assistance Loans allow producers to use eligible commodities as loan collateral and obtain a 9-month loan while the crop is in storage. These loans provide cash flow to the producer and allow them to market the crop when prices may be more advantageous.

Farm Storage Facility Loans can be used to build permanent structures used to store eligible commodities, for storage and handling trucks, or portable or permanent handling equipment. A variety of structures are eligible under this loan, including bunker silos, grain bins, hay storage structures, and refrigerated structures for vegetables and fruit. A producer may borrow up to $500,000 per loan.

Certain Service Centers in North Carolina Reopening to Limited Visitors

Contact your Service Center to find out if it is open to limited visitors.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools.

Call your Service Center to schedule an appointment. You can find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Selected Interest Rates for April 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan Type</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-Day Treasury Bill</td>
<td>0.125%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Operating Loans - Direct</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership Loans - Direct</td>
<td>2.875%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Ownership Loans - Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Loans</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)</td>
<td>0.875%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodity Loans</td>
<td>0.125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Sereno</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Dedrick</td>
<td>Director - Compliance Office</td>
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