In This Issue:

- USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers
- USDA Opens 2022 Signup for Dairy Margin Coverage, Expands Program for Supplemental Production
- USDA to Issue Final Pandemic Payments for Timber Harvesters and Haulers
- FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options
- NRCS in Oklahoma Accepting Applications from Producers and Landowners for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Oklahoma NRCS Announced January 7, 2022 Deadline for ACEP-WRE

USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new program to assist hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale during the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) is part of USDA’s Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications Dec. 15, 2021 through Feb. 25, 2022.

SMHPP provides assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020. Negotiated sale, or negotiated formula sale, means a sale of hogs by a producer to a packer under which the base price for the hogs is determined by seller-buyer interaction and agreement on a delivery day. USDA is offering SMHPP as packer production was reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic due to employee illness and supply chain issues, resulting in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices.

The Department has set aside up to $50 million in pandemic assistance funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for SMHPP.

SMHPP Program Details
Eligible hogs include hogs sold through a negotiated sale by producers between April 16, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020. To be eligible, the producer must be a person or legal entity who has ownership in the hogs and whose production facilities are located in the United States, including U.S. territories. Contract producers, federal, state and local governments, including public schools and packers are not eligible for SMHPP.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of $54 per head. FSA will issue payments to eligible hog producers as applications are received and approved.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP starting Dec. 15, 2021, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/smhpp for a copy of the Notice of Funds Availability, information on applicant eligibility and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a higher loan limit will be available for borrowers seeking a guaranteed farm loan starting Oct. 1, 2021, from $1.776 million to $1.825 million.

FSA farm loans offer access to funding for a wide range of producer needs, from securing land to financing the purchase of equipment. Guaranteed loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

In fiscal year 2021, FSA saw continued strong demand for guaranteed loans. FSA obligated more than $3.4 billion in guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans. This includes nearly $1.2 billion for beginning farmers. The number of guaranteed borrowers has grown by 10% to more than 38,750 farmers and ranchers over the last decade. FSA expects the increasing demand for farm loans to continue into fiscal year 2022.

Disaster Set-Aside Extension

USDA has additional support available to producers given the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 Delta variant and has extended the availability of COVID-19 Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) for installments due through Jan. 31, 2022. In addition, FSA will permit a second DSA for COVID-19 and a second DSA for natural disasters for those who had an initial COVID-19 DSA. Requests for a COVID-19 DSA or a second DSA must be received no later than May 1, 2022.

Last year, FSA broadened the use of the DSA. Normally used in the wake of natural disasters, the DSA can now allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19 and determined to be eligible, to have their next payment set aside. 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 will improve the borrower’s cashflow in the current production cycle.

More Information

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their local USDA Service Center. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA’s response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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, fairer markets for all producers, 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 across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

USDA Opens 2022 Signup for Dairy Margin Coverage, Expands Program for Supplemental Production

USDA opened signup for the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program and expanded the program to allow dairy producers to better protect their operations by enrolling supplemental production. This signup period – which runs from Dec. 13, 2021 to Feb. 18, 2022 – enables producers to get coverage through this important safety-net program for another year as well as get additional assistance through the new Supplemental DMC. Read more

USDA to Issue Final Pandemic Payments for Timber Harvesters and Haulers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin issuing final pandemic assistance payments to timber harvesters and timber hauling businesses through the Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers (PATHH) program starting next week. In total, $200 million will be provided to loggers and log trucking businesses who experienced a gross revenue loss of at least 10% during the period of Jan. 1 through Dec. 1, 2020, compared to the period of Jan. 1 through Dec. 1, 2019. This support is part of USDA’s broader Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative.
Eligible PATHH applicants must have derived at least 50 percent of total gross revenue from timber harvesting and/or timber hauling. Specifically, eligible activities included cutting timber, transporting timber and/or the processing of wood on-site on the forest land, such as chipping, grinding, converting to biochar or cutting to smaller lengths.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized up to $200 million for PATHH. FSA issued initial payments up to $2,000 as applications were approved. Now that signup has ended and FSA has evaluated remaining funds, FSA has started to issue second payments to those applicants whose calculated payment amount was over $2,000.

Based on the number of actual PATHH applications filed, FSA will be required to lower the payment limitation for PATHH from $125,000 to $75,000 and apply a payment factor of 70.5% across all calculated payments to ensure program outlays do not exceed the available funding. These provisions were previously outlined in the Notice of Funding Availability in the event the revenue loss reported exceeded available funding.

FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options

There are options for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about your options.

If you do not make your payments by the due date, you will be delinquent on your FSA loans. FSA has several loan servicing options that can be used to bring your account current and can often make a new restructured payment plan specifically for your operation FSA calls this process Primary Loan Servicing. By law, Primary Loan Servicing actions must follow some very detailed guidelines with important deadlines. When you have been delinquent on your payments for 90 days, FSA will send you a letter telling you about Primary Loan Servicing and exactly what you must do to apply. You will have 60 days to provide a complete application to FSA, but it is important that you get started right away. You will receive a reminder letter from the FSA in about 30 days to make sure you know exactly where you are at in the application process.

NRCS in Oklahoma Accepting Applications from Producers and Landowners for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

There’s a very good chance this program could help you. Individuals in Oklahoma who are engaged in livestock, crop or forest production whose land use includes cropland, rangeland, pasture and private non-industrial forestland are eligible to apply for the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The deadline for applying in the current fiscal year is January 07, 2022.
Those applying for EQIP must: Control or own eligible land; Comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions; Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements, and develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations. It is important to note that starting a practice prior to written contract approval will result in the ineligibility of that practice for EQIP assistance unless a waiver has been approved. Additional restrictions and program requirements may apply.

**Oklahoma's state priorities** are developed annually from input from local workgroups based on county resource assessments and individual plans to address those local needs. The USDA State Technical Committee, comprised of representation from these local work groups, Tribal groups, commodity groups, and conservation partners, advise NRCS on the implementation of EQIP.

The following **national priorities**, consistent with statutory resource concerns that include soil, water, wildlife, air quality, and related natural resource concerns, may be used in determining EQIP priority implementation:

1. Water Quality Improvement
2. Soil Quality Improvement
3. Source Water Depletion

EQIP activities are carried out according to a site-specific conservation plan developed in conjunction with the producer. All conservation practices must be installed according to NRCS technical standards. Oklahoma's producers may elect to use an approved technical service provider for technical assistance.

While EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis, NRCS establishes application "cut-off" or submission deadline dates for evaluation, ranking and approval of eligible applications. EQIP is open to all eligible agricultural producers and submitted applications may be considered or evaluated in multiple funding pool opportunities.

Those Oklahoma producers applying are responsible for completing and filing all application and eligibility paperwork as required. If funded, participants are required to sign a contract and agree to implement the planned conservation practices to NRCS standards and specifications as scheduled.

Visit the [USDA New Farmers website](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs) for tips on getting started.

EQIP is open to all eligible agricultural producers without discrimination or bias.

For Information on Ranking Criteria, Screening, Eligible Practices, and Approved Payment Rates see County, Statewide, and National Initiatives web pages at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs).

**To apply for EQIP, producers should contact their local NRCS field office, to be considered in the current application period ending January 07, 2022.**

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 the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an
Oklahoma NRCS Announced January 7, 2022 Deadline for ACEP-WRE

Oklahoma's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, Gary O'Neill, has announced the agency is accepting applications for its ACEP-WRE Program, and those submitted by January 7, 2022, will be considered for FY2022 funding. The NRCS will prioritize applications that protect, restore and enhance habitat for wildlife on their lands and reduce damage from flooding and recharge groundwater.

Land eligible for easements includes cropland, rangeland, grassland and pastureland land owned by private individuals or Native American Tribes. Wetlands Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) has two components, one for Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). Applications for both ALE and WRE are accepted on a continuous basis.

- Under the ALE component, funds are provided to eligible entities that use ACEP funding to purchase permanent agricultural land easements that not only protect the future of the nation's food supply, they also support environmental quality, wildlife habitat, and historic preservation and protection of open spaces.
- Under the WRE component, funding is provided directly to landowners for the purchase of an easement and for restoration. Wetland reserve easements allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance, and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands. Eligible landowners may choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Eligible lands include farmed or converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.

To apply for a Wetland Reserve Easement, landowners should contact their local NRCS field office, to be considered in the current batching period ending January 7, 2022.

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 the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 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 may also be required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Field work will
continue with appropriate social distancing. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in office, by phone, and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.