A Message from the SED

Greetings!

I am Steve Kouplen, the new State Executive Director for the Oklahoma Farm Service Agency. I am a born and raised Oklahoma Cattleman from Okmulgee County. While operating my commercial cow-calf operation, I served as a Chairman of the Oklahoma Beef Council, the President of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, and on my local FSA County Committee, Rural Water Board, School Board as well as Rural Electric Board of Directors.

I have a passion for agriculture and put Oklahoma Producers at the forefront of my mission. I have a background in farming and ranching in eastern Oklahoma as I operate a commercial Hereford operation. I look forward to serving the producers of Oklahoma with this new opportunity.
Agriculture is the backbone of the country and I look forward to assisting the producers of Oklahoma to feed and fuel our rural communities as well as our county.

Best wishes,
Steve Kouplen

USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program Signups for 2022

Agricultural producers and landowners can sign up soon for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a cornerstone conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool in the Biden-Harris Administration effort to address climate change and achieve other natural resource benefits. The General CRP signup will run from Jan. 31 to March 11, and the Grassland CRP signup will run from April 4 to May 13.

Producers and landowners enrolled 4.6 million acres into CRP signups in 2021, including 2.5 million acres in the largest Grassland CRP signup in history. There are currently 22.1 million acres enrolled, and FSA is aiming to reach the 25.5-million-acre cap statutorily set for fiscal year 2022.

**CRP Signups**

General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland.

Meanwhile, Grassland CRP is a working lands program, helping landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

Alongside these programs, producers and landowners can enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

**Climate Benefits**

Last year, FSA enacted a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP General and Continuous signups, to better target CRP on addressing climate change. This incentive aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CRP’s climate-smart practices include establishment of trees and permanent grasses, development of wildlife habitat and
wetland restoration. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is annual, and the amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.

Additionally, in order to better target the program toward climate outcomes, USDA invested $10 million last year in the CRP Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (MAE) program to measure and monitor the soil carbon and climate resilience impacts of conservation practices over the life of new CRP contracts. This will enable the agency to further refine the program and practices to provide producers tools for increased climate resilience.

More Information on CRP

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to apply for the program — for General CRP before the March 11 deadline, and for Grassland CRP before the May 13 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Due to the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

Producers with Crop Insurance to Receive Premium Benefit for Cover Crop

Agricultural producers who have coverage under most crop insurance policies are eligible for a premium benefit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) if they planted cover crops during the 2022 crop year. To receive the benefit from this year’s Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), producers must report cover crop acreage by March 15, 2022.

PCCP, offered by USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA), helps farmers maintain their cover crop systems, despite the financial challenges posed by the pandemic and is part of USDA’s Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative, a bundle of programs to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions.

PCCP provides premium support to producers who insured their crop with most insurance policies and planted a qualifying cover crop during the 2022 crop year. The premium support is $5 per acre, but no more than the full premium amount owed.

< Pandemic Cover Crop Program >
Agricultural Producers Have Until March 15 to Enroll in USDA’s Key Commodity Safety Net Programs

Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2022 crop year have until March 15, 2022, to sign a contract. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers these two safety net programs to provide vital income support to farmers experiencing substantial declines in crop prices or revenues.

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County or PLC, which are both crop-by-crop, or ARC-Individual, which is for the entire farm. Although election changes for 2022 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2022, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the March 15, 2022, deadline, the election remains the same as the 2021 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the crop.

Producers have completed 976,249 contracts to date, representing 54% of the more than 1.8 million expected contracts.

Producers who do not complete enrollment by the deadline will not be enrolled in ARC or PLC for the 2022 crop year and will not receive a payment if triggered.

Producers are eligible to enroll farms with base acres for the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed, and wheat.

Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, two web-based decision tools are available to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations:

- **Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator**, a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- **ARC and PLC Decision Tool**, a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to estimate payments and yield updates and expected payments for 2022.

Crop Insurance Considerations and Decision Deadline

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.
Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Producers should contact their crop insurance agent to make certain that the election and enrollment made at FSA follows their intention to participate in STAX or SCO coverage. Producers have until March 15, 2022, to make the appropriate changes or cancel their ARC or PLC contract.

More Information

In addition to the March 15 deadline for ARC and PLC, other important deadlines include:

- March 1, Livestock Indemnity Program
- March 11, Conservation Reserve Program General Signup
- March 15, Pandemic Cover Crop Program
- March 25, Dairy Margin Coverage

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](https://www.ars.usda.gov) or contact their local USDA Service Center. In those service centers where COVID cases exceed safety levels, staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email and other digital tools. Producers with level 2 eauthentication access can electronically sign contracts or may make arrangements to drop off signed contracts at the FSA county office. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](https://www.fsa.usda.gov) are open to limited visitors.

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**New Online Tool Allows Farmers, Ranchers to Easily Report Anticompetitive Practices**

Farmers, ranchers, and other producers and growers now have a one-stop shop to help ensure they are treated fairly. The new [farmerfairness.gov](https://www.farmerfairness.gov) portal developed jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Justice (DOJ) allows you to report
potential violations of livestock and poultry antitrust laws, including the Packers and Stockyards Act. Read More

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**Higher Loan Limit Now Available for USDA Guaranteed Farm Loans**

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.

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**USDA to Invest $1 Billion in Climate Smart Commodities, Expanding Markets, Strengthening Rural America**

*Funding Opportunity Opens to Pilot New Revenue Streams for America’s Climate-Smart Farmers, Ranchers and Forest Landowners*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on February 7 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is delivering on its promise to expand markets by investing $1 billion in partnerships to support America’s climate-smart farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. The new [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#) opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits. USDA is now accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a climate-smart commodity is defined as an agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon.
Funding will be provided to partners through the USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation for pilot projects to provide incentives to producers and landowners to:

- implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
- measure/quantify, monitor and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and
- develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Funding will be provided in two funding pools, and applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on:

- April 8, 2022, for the first funding pool (proposals from $5 million to $100 million), and
- May 27, 2022, for the second funding pool (proposals from $250,000 to $4,999,999).

A wide range of organizations may apply, but the primary applicant must be an entity, not an individual.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and is specifically seeking proposals from entities serving all types of producers, including small or historically underserved producers.

Visit usda.gov for additional information including Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

NRCS in Oklahoma Announces Conservation Stewardship Program Signup

USDA is accepting applications from agricultural producers and forest landowners from Oklahoma for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Agricultural producers and forest landowners looking to build on conservation efforts while strengthening their operation can apply for technical and financial assistance through CSP.

While USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) accepts CSP applications year-round, Oklahoma producers and landowners should apply by March 31, 2022 to be considered for funding in the current cycle.

State Technical Committees, composed of conservation and agricultural-related agency and organization representatives, work with NRCS to identify resource priorities and how best to address them. NRCS then sets state-specific, ranking dates to evaluate applications for funding that account for producer needs, staff workload and ensure potential participants have ample opportunities to apply. Find Oklahoma’s ranking dates for CSP and other conservation programs at www.nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates.

NRCS offers CSP in all 50 states and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous signups. The program provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to adverse weather. CSP is for
working lands, including cropland, pasturceland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under Indian tribe jurisdiction.

Additionally, existing CSP participants may have an opportunity to renew their contracts in the first half of the fifth year of their five-year contract through a competitive application process.

Special provisions are available for historically underserved producers, which include those considered beginning, socially disadvantaged and limited resource as well as military veterans. These producers are targeted funds.

Find eligible practices in Oklahoma and practice payment amounts. Payment rates for conservation practices are reviewed and set each fiscal year for the state.

To apply for CSP, contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center. Find your local Service Center at www.farmers.gov/service-locator.

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

Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC) address priority resource concerns, including sequestering carbon and improving soil health in high-priority areas. Through these contracts, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with producers to strengthen the quality and condition of natural resources on their operations using management practices, such as irrigation water management, drainage water management, feed management and residue and tillage management that target resource concerns, including degraded soil and water quality, available water, and soil erosion.

CIC offer producers annual incentive payments to implement management practices as well as conservation evaluation and monitoring activities to help manage, maintain, and improve priority natural resource concerns within state high-priority areas and build on existing conservation efforts. Download our CIC fact sheet for additional information and see the priorities identified for Oklahoma below.

The priority resource concern and land use identified by the State Technical Committee for Oklahoma in 2022 is Soil Quality Limitations on Cropland. Eligible management practices to address the resource concern are:

- 328- Conservation Crop Rotation
- 329- Residue and Tillage Mgt, No Till
- 340- Cover Crop
The 2018 Farm Bill created the new CIC option, and it was piloted in 2021 in four states, the contracts last five years.

**How to Apply**

NRCS accepts applications for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) -CIC year-round, however producers and landowners should apply by **Feb. 25, 2022** to be considered for each year’s funding.

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](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

### NRCS and FSA Scheduled to Participate in the 2022 ODAFF and ONIE Project Local AG Summit Meeting

The Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) are scheduled to participate in the Oklahoma Nutrition Information Education (ONIE) Project and Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (ODAFF) Local Summit Meeting to provide information about the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (BFR) program and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

This year the ONIE Project and ODAFF are hosting the Oklahoma Local Agriculture Summit (OKLAS) on March 1-3 at Stoney Creek Hotel in Broken Arrow. This multi-day conference will feature both in-person & virtual sessions of interest for farmers market managers, producers, community support organizations, and agritourism site managers.

The three-day conference will feature 20+ Breakout sessions, a post event social hour, and many add-on workshops. The summit is being facilitated by industry leaders from agricultural, community, and public health agencies. More information on the Local AG Summit Meeting can be [found here](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

To register for the conference, [click here](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).
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