



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

South Dakota USDA Newsletter - November 2023

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## Message from the FSA State Director

Greetings from the South Dakota State FSA Office!

**Local control:** two words that public officials toss around more than a football in the tailgate lot of the Dakota Dome. When we hear people talk about local control it is often in reference to a school board deciding educational policies; or a township board deciding if a road should be maintained.

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People rarely utter the words “local control” and “federal government” in the same sentence. However, with the Farm Service Agency’s County Committee structure, we have the very basics of local control. Truly a one-of-a-kind for the federal government.

Over 200 farmers and ranchers serve on 55 FSA County Committees across South Dakota providing local control of FSA program administration. The County Committee members are elected by their neighbors to provide guidance and supervision over the FSA programs. The Committee structure has been in place since 1935.

Recently you may have received a ballot for the upcoming County Committee elections in your area. Please take a moment to fill out your ballot, you can either drop it in the mail or return it to your local FSA office. The ballots are due back in the office by Dec. 4, 2023.

Please do your part by participating in democracy at local level for the FSA County Committee elections.

A reminder to everyone; USDA Service Centers will be closed Thanksgiving Day, November 23. Please be safe if you and your family are traveling this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Steve Dick  
State Executive Director  
USDA-Farm Service Agency

## Message from the NRCS State Conservationist

This is a good time of year for landowners and producers to assess conservation needs. Effects of the year’s grazing decisions, cropland rotations, and recent infrastructure may be more visible now. I encourage you to evaluate your land and then visit with your local NRCS staff about [natural resource concerns](#) and [on-site assessments](#). If you might need some financial assistance to get started, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) has greatly increased the available funding for South Dakota producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This extra funding is only available for a limited time. IRA funding has also expanded NRCS’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The article below titled “USDA Streamlines Regional Conservation Partnership Program, South Dakota Projects Receive \$61 Million...” explains further and lists four [South Dakota partner led projects](#) recently awarded. Congratulations to those partners.

November is Native American Heritage Month, a time when we honor and celebrate the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of Native American peoples. South Dakota has a deep and vibrant Native American heritage, with several tribal nations residing within the state. I had the honor and privilege to visit the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch and present them with the 2023 South Dakota NRCS Cooperative Conservation Award for their ongoing conservation outreach to producers and students. Many thanks to the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch for their efforts towards conservation. See the included article titled “Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch Awarded for Excellence in Cooperative Conservation” to learn more.

Thank you to all SD farmers, ranchers, land managers, landowners, and conservation partners who are moving the needle of conservation in our state.

Sincerely,

Tony Sunseri  
State Conservationist  
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Important Dates & Deadlines

November 23, 2023 - All USDA Offices closed for Thanksgiving Day Holiday

December 4, 2023 - Deadline to return ballots for County Committee Elections

December 25, 2023 - All USDA Offices closed for Christmas Day Holiday

December 31, 2023 - Deadline for Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Distressed Borrowers

January 1, 2024 - All USDA Offices closed for New Year's Day Holiday

January 13, 2024 - Application deadline for Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

## Applying for NAP Payments

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 "Application for Coverage" and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses

become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 “Notice of Loss and Application for Payment” within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap).

## Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you’ve suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, you’ll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

## Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress

concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

## Update Your Records

FSA is cleaning up our producer record database and needs your help. Please report any changes of address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file to our office. You should also report changes in your farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase. You should also report any changes to your operation in which you reorganize to form a Trust, LLC or other legal entity.

FSA and NRCS program participants are required to promptly report changes in their farming operation to the County Committee in writing and to update their *Farm Operating Plan* on form CCC-902.

To update your records, contact your local County USDA Service Center.

## Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

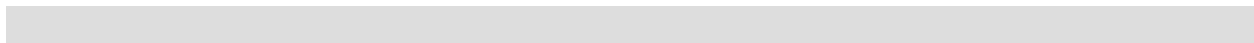
## USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/microloans](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

## 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.

## **Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

## **USDA Streamlines Regional Conservation Partnership Program, South Dakota Projects Receive \$61 Million as Part of Unprecedented \$1 Billion Investment**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced improvements to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as well as an unprecedented \$1 billion investment to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects. South Dakota projects will receive \$61 million in funding. RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Historic funding is made possible by both the Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, and the Farm Bill.

"The unprecedented demand for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, shows how much interest there is from producers and partners for voluntary conservation on the ground," said Tony Sunseri, State Conservationist in South Dakota for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "USDA is making historic investments and streamlining the program to make it work better for producers and partners. The combination of historic investments and streamlining actions will deliver conservation at a scale never before achieved through RCPP."

### **RCPP Improvements**

NRCS has identified ways to streamline and simplify RCPP, ease the burden on employees and partners, and help maximize flexibility for partners to leverage their investments with NRCS resources and capabilities.

Through a concerted effort over the past eight months, using guidance, feedback and expertise from partners, employees, leadership and stakeholders, NRCS has identified several improvements that the agency will implement in the months and years ahead.

Improvements include:

- Streamlining RCPP agreements for fiscal year 2023 awards and moving to one programmatic agreement to begin implementing the RCPP projects awarded under the fiscal year 2024 notice of funding opportunity. This will allow partners to more quickly begin implementation of their RCPP projects.
- Entrusting program management and negotiation to the State Conservationists, who lead NRCS programs in each state, further encouraging the locally led process and ensuring the necessary technical needs and costs were realized before project proposal submission.
- Establishing parameters and expectations for easement negotiations, including availability of easement deed templates and established program processes to reduce partnership agreement negotiation and implementation timeframes.
- Improving RCPP guidance and training, ensuring RCPP policies and procedures are communicated in a uniform and consistent manner.
- Enhancing existing business tools to improve the user experience while beginning development of new business tools that, through integration and automation, will reduce the time required for agreement negotiation, processing obligations and making payments to partners.

For the full list of RCPP improvements NRCS has identified for future implementation, [visit our website](#).

Once improvements have been implemented, NRCS estimated that the negotiation time of RCPP agreements with U.S.-held easement activities will be reduced from 15 months to three months, and from 19 months to three months with entity-held easement activities.

The RCPP improvements are coming at a critical time, as they will strengthen NRCS' ability to implement the Inflation Reduction Act, which provided \$4.95 billion in additional funding for the program over five years.

**Unprecedented RCPP Funding** In South Dakota, projects include:

- South Dakota Grasslands Initiative
- Conservation Easements in the Northern Great Plains of South Dakota
- Agropur Dairy Producers Best Management Practices Project
- Making Sure Every Acre Counts

For more information on these projects, visit the [2023 awarded projects list](#).

The Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act provided funding for this year's RCPP projects.

With this \$1.1 billion investment, NRCS has more than doubled the initial allocation for 2023 to capitalize on the unprecedented demand for RCPP and ensure project partners have the

maximum amount of time to successfully implement conservation activities before funds expire in fiscal year 2031. Nationwide, there are:

- 77 climate-focused projects (\$1.02 billion in funding).
- Twenty-two projects focused on water quantity and conservation (more than \$338 million in funding).
- Three RCPP Classic projects are led by Tribes (more than \$58 million in funding).
- Sixteen projects support the protection and restoration of wildlife corridors (\$216 million in funding).
- Ten projects focus on urban agriculture (\$123 million in funding).

For a full list of selected projects [visit our website](#). Since inception, RCPP has made 717 awards involving over 4,000 partner organizations.

### **Inflation Reduction Act Boosts Voluntary Conservation Programs**

Through the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA has enrolled more farmers and more acres in voluntary conservation programs than at any point in history, following a backlog that has existed for years. In 2023, USDA enrolled nearly 5,300 additional producers in conservation programs across all 50 states (above what otherwise would have been possible through Farm Bill and appropriations funding), which will provide significant climate mitigation benefits. This includes:

- \$100 million through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP);
- \$250 million through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); and
- \$250 million through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

### **More Information**

In total, the Inflation Reduction Act provides \$19.5 billion over five years to support USDA's oversubscribed conservation programs, and it represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history.

## **Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch Awarded for Excellence in Cooperative Conservation**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) NRCS serving South Dakota awarded the 2023 Excellence in Cooperative Conservation Award to the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch for their conservation outreach and education on Tribal land.

The Excellence in Cooperative Conservation Award highlights an individual or group's capability to communicate, grow, and innovate to conserve South Dakota's natural resources.

"The Excellence in Cooperative Conservation Award puts a spotlight on the contributions our partners make to help promote conservation solutions and get conservation on the ground," said State Conservationist Tony Sunseri, "This is especially important as we try to broaden our reach to new and underserved audiences."





The Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch has been a close partner with NRCS for many years. Since 2019, the Tribal Ranch worked with NRCS and South Dakota State University Extension to host a range day for producers and students in the local area. The event consists of an adult and youth component. At the beginning of the workshop, the adult group meets with a Tribal elder to talk about the different medicinal plants on the landscape and how they were used historically. After that, the group does a pasture walk and identifies the different plants on the landscape while discussing their agricultural uses. At the end of the pasture walk, the group shares a meal while discussing the tour and sharing their experiences. The youth group then arrives and goes on their pasture tour, concluding the day with fry bread and a sampling of jams and jellies made by a tribal member from native plants.

“South Dakota is home to nine tribes, and working with them is key to the NRCS mission,” said Tribal Liaison Mary Scott. “The Rosebud Range Workshop is one of many ways these partners contribute to conservation outreach in their local community and help people help the land.”

The Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch received the award on November 1, 2023, the start of Native American Heritage Month, on the ranch in Todd County.

“The start of Native American Heritage Month is a perfect time to honor the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Ranch for their outreach,” said Tony Sunseri. “We recognize the contributions that they have made to conservation efforts in South Dakota and are honored to present the 2023 Excellence in Cooperative Conservation Award to them.”

## Crop Insurance for Specialty and Organic Crops Grow as Options Improve and Expand

USDA is beefing up crop insurance options for specialty crop and organic producers, including rolling out new and expanded options based on feedback from America’s agricultural producers. To achieve this, USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) accelerated its outreach efforts to hear directly from producers across the country by hosting in-person and virtual roadshows and making investments in risk management education. These improvements are part of a comprehensive effort to improve risk management tools and other programs for a wide variety of producers as well as expand access to organic markets.

From 1990 to 2022, liabilities for insured specialty crops rose from \$1 billion to more than \$23 billion. Over the past 20 years, the number of individual specialty crops insured under crop insurance programs increased by 27%. Currently, there are over 70 individual specialty crops insured under crop insurance programs.

### New Insurance Options:

- **Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (TOGA):** For 2022, RMA offered [this new program](#) reduce a producer’s overall crop insurance premium bill allowing them to continue using organic agricultural systems. Premium benefits for TOGA included: 10 percentage points of premium subsidy for all crops in transition, \$5 per acre premium benefit for certified organic grain and feed crops, and 10 percentage points of premium subsidy for all Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) policies

covering any number of crops in transition to organic or crops with the certified organic practice.

- **Tropical Storm Coverage:** For crop year 2023 and succeeding years, RMA added a new option to [Hurricane Insurance Protection – Wind Index \(HIP-WI\)](#) for named tropical storm weather events. The Tropical Storm Option covers damage caused by strong weather systems not categorized as hurricanes. Both a wind and precipitation trigger must occur for an indemnity to be paid. This new option helped many producers recover after Hurricane Idalia this year. About 60% of eligible policies elected this option.
- **Grapevine:** Beginning in crop year 2024, producers can insure all types of grapevines in select counties in California, Idaho, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. [This policy](#) complements the existing Grape crop insurance program that covers the fruit growing on the vine. The policy covers freeze, fire, hail, flood, failure of irrigation water supply, and other causes of loss.
- **Kiwifruit:** Beginning in crop year 2024, producers in 12 California counties can insure their kiwifruit against unforeseen weather perils and other naturally occurring perils. [The program](#) covers three varietal group types: Hayward; Reds & Golds; and Mega. The Hayward variety currently makes up 92% of the California crop followed by non-Hayward varieties, including reds and golds and one green variety marketed as Mega Kiwi.
- **Pomegranate:** Beginning in crop year 2023, pomegranate producers in select California counties can receive yield-based insurance coverage for standard weather, natural, and environmental perils as well as quality losses. Coverage is available for two varietal groups: “Early” and the ‘Wonderful’ varieties and all others. [The program](#) also recognizes the different utilization values of fresh fruit, arils, and juice.
- **Shellfish:** Beginning in crop year 2024, producers can insure their commercially cultivated oysters that are grown using containerized methods. [This program](#) offers production-based coverage on an individual producer basis. This insurance option provides coverage against four perils including: named storms, excessive heat, freeze, and low salinity and will be available in select counties in Alabama, California, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.
- **Controlled Environment:** Beginning in crop year 2024, producers can insure plants produced in a controlled environment against disease that occurs in their facility. [This program](#) will provide the following benefits: simple application and policy renewal process, like the Nursery Value Select program, and insurance for controlled environment producer-selected plant categories. In addition to specialty crop and organic producers, this policy will greatly benefit urban producers.

#### Improved Insurance Options:

- **Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Program (WFRP):** Several improvements will begin in the 2024 policy year including: allowing all eligible producers to qualify for 80% and 85% coverage levels; allowing producers to purchase catastrophic coverage level policies for individual crops with [WFRP](#); expanding yield history to a 10-year maximum (from four years) for all crops not covered by another federal crop insurance policy; making the policy more affordable for single commodity producers; and allowing producers to customize their coverage by choosing whether WFRP will

consider other federal crop insurance policies as primary insurance when calculating premium and revenue to count during claim time.

- **Micro Farm:** Several updates were made to [Micro Farm](#) including: moving the sales closing date to a less busy time of year to help agents dedicate time to marketing the program, allowing producers to purchase other federal crop insurance with Micro Farm, allowing vertically integrated entities to be eligible and making the Expanding Operations feature available.
- **Pistachios:** Several revisions were made to the [Pistachio policy](#) including: allowing insurance for producers with fewer than four years of production records under the new Transitional Yields (T-Yields); clarifying simple average approved yield for APH databases containing T-Yields; clarifying variability adjustment requirements for actual production history databases; and allowing assigned yields and temporary yields if indicated in the Special Provisions.
- **Quality Loss Option (QLO):** RMA is making the QLO available to several initial specialty crops, including avocados (California only), blueberries, cranberries, grapes, peaches, stone fruit, and table grapes. RMA plans to make the option available to additional specialty crops in the upcoming months after further review.

### More Information

Specialty crop producers can learn more on [RMA's Specialty Crop Page](#) or by contacting one of RMA's specialty crop liaisons, who serve as points of contact for local specialty crop producers. Organic producers can learn more at [RMA's Organic webpage](#). Producers can receive the most up to date information about RMA insurance options for specialty crops by [subscribing to GovDelivery](#).



### USDA in South Dakota

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