



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

South Dakota USDA Newsletter - March 2023

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## Message from the FSA State Director

Greetings from the South Dakota State FSA Office,

Most everyone has either seen, or at least knows of, the movie *Groundhog Day*. You know, the romance comedy most guys will watch multiple times only because its stars Bill Murray. Even though we are a month and a half past the actual Groundhog Day of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, it feels like we are stuck in the movie. The snow starts to settle, the temps get slightly above freezing, and then winter comes back. Another 3 to 5 inches of snow falls and it all piles up again. I can only imagine what school superintendents must feel like every time they look at the forecast.

Not only do school administrators pay attention to the weather forecast, but so does your local FSA office. This winter we have had multiply days where there was no travel advised, interstates and highways were closed, courthouses and states offices closed, retailers closed, and a host of postponements and cancellations.

However, if a farmer or rancher wanted to do business with their FSA office, even if the USDA Service Center building was closed, they could still call the office and speak to an FSA employee or communicate with them via e-mail. This is because the Biden-Harris Administration has allowed FSA employees to telework when weather doesn't allow the physical office to be open. The staff have been armed with the necessary technology to complete many of the tasks remotely, just as they do every day in the office.

Outfitting the FSA staff with technology to better serve producers is just one way FSA is striving to improve service. Recently FSA launched a [simplified application](#) process for direct loan applicants, it reduced the application from 29 pages to 13. In the near future an online option for signatures will be added along with the ability to attach supporting documents and email them to the office.

Even with the ability to do business online farmers and ranchers are still very much welcome in their county office!

Since we can't seem to shake this winter weather; I want to remind folks who experienced livestock losses due to adverse winter weather to file a notice of loss under [the Livestock Indemnity Program](#) with your local FSA office. This must be completed within 30 days when the loss is first apparent to be eligible.

Producers also may be eligible for assistance for transporting feed stuffs under [ELAP](#). Please check with local FSA office about eligibility for your operation.

Another program to be aware of is the sign up for [Revenue Loss Assistance](#). The program is part of legislation signed by President Biden in 2021 to assist farm and ranch families who experience disasters in crop years 2020 or 2021. It also aids producers who suffered a loss in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Signup for both programs is now open.

Wishing everyone a safe and productive calving and lambing season!

Steve Dick  
State Executive Director  
USDA-Farm Service Agency

## Message from the NRCS State Conservationist

Greetings,

The [South Dakota Specialty Producers Association](#) will be hosting the [Upper Midwest Urban and Rural Ag Innovation Conference](#) March 21-22 in Ft. Pierre. I encourage your participation as this event brings together experts and knowledgeable leaders to discuss the latest innovations and best practices in soil health, specialty crop production, and livestock management.

Funding from the Inflation Reduction Act will provide additional assistance to our forestland and agricultural producers to invest in activities that directly improve soil carbon, reduce

nitrogen loss, sequester carbon dioxide and other climate smart activities. Some common examples include cover cropping, conservation tillage, prescribed grazing, and nutrient management. Refer to the 'Inflation Reduction Act Funding...' article below for more information and continue working with your local NRCS office on your operation's conservation needs.

A printed resource has recently arrived at our USDA Service Centers titled 'Getting Started: Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers'. This is a great tool if you are new to USDA or even as a reference as you continue to work with your local USDA Service Center. This resource describes services available, what to expect, and explains terminology. Please [download your copy here](#) from [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) or obtain a copy from a [local Service Center](#) if you or someone you know could benefit from this resource.

Thank you to all South Dakota farmers, ranchers, and landowners who are moving the needle of conservation in our state.

Tony Sunseri  
State Conservationist  
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service

## **South Dakota FSA introduces State Committee members. Peggy Greenway and her family farm near Mitchell, SD.**

Many people involved in the world of agriculture say it was a natural career choice because of being raised on a farm, or in the country. For Peggy Greenway, her path to the world of agriculture was a little more unconventional as she went from the suburbs of Saint Paul, MN to the countryside surrounding Mitchell, SD.

Growing up in the urban area surrounding St. Paul, Greenway says her exposure to agriculture was limited to an uncle who raised pigs. But all that changed when she left for college at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, MN. While attending classes, she met her husband and moved with him back to the Mitchell area.

Marrying into a family farm where her husband was the third generation, allowed Greenway an education of agriculture by emersion. Now 40 years later, it is a lifestyle she loves and has become passionate about.

For Greenway farming is a family affair. She has been working full-time alongside her husband Brad, for the last 10 years on their operation where they raise row crops, have a beef cow/calf herd and raise pigs from wean to finish. Their son, Brent, has also joined them full-time on the farm for the last four years and is looking forward to one day taking over the operation.

"There is a lot of misinformation about the ag industry. People don't understand farms are still ran by families. They see operations getting bigger and they forget it is still their friends and neighbors. This is one of the main things I try to get across."

Greenway is excited about the future of agriculture and the benefits advancing technology has brought to the industry. According to Greenway the use of technology isn't about making the

life of farming easier, it simply makes it more efficient so the farmer or rancher can spend more time caring for the animals and land in ways which manages our resources more wisely.

“Food production is not going away. We have already seen so many changes in our lifetime. I think it’s exciting that young farmers are coming back and bringing their knowledge of technology with them.”

When asked how she felt about her role on the State Committee Greenway simply said “honored”. She is interested to know the concerns of South Dakota producers across the state and is passionate about her role on the committee.

“I want to make sure the farmers have access to what they need.”

The world of agriculture is diverse and is continually changing. Greenway is quick to recognize the fluid nature of the industry. In her opinion it is easier to get started if you are a second generation or later, but it doesn’t make it impossible. According to Greenway it is important to learn from others, especially the older folks who have seen a few seasons and market turns. Networking and gaining knowledge wherever possible are vital to future success.

“It is important to be well rounded and listen. None of us got to where we are all on our own.”

## **USDA Announces General Conservation Reserve Program Signups for 2023**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup starting **February 27 through April 7, 2023**. CRP is a cornerstone voluntary conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool in the Biden-Harris administration’s effort to address climate change and help agricultural communities invest in the long-term well-being of their land and natural resources.

Producers and landowners enrolled more than 5 million acres into CRP through signups in 2022, building on the acceptance of more than 3.1 million acres in the [largest Grassland CRP signup in history](#). There are currently 23 million acres enrolled in CRP, with 1.9 million set to expire this year. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is aiming to reach the 27-million-acre cap statutorily set for fiscal year 2023.

### **General CRP**

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. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

### **Continuous CRP**

Under Continuous CRP, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility

requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative (CLEAR30), the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watershed, has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices. Under this administration, FSA also moved SAFE practices back to the Continuous CRP signup, giving producers and landowners more opportunities to participate in the initiative. Through the FWP, producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP as part of their efforts to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, to improve both vegetation and water flow.

This administration has also made significant improvements to CREP, which leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific State, regional or nationally significant conservation concerns. Specifically, USDA made significant improvements to CREP to reduce barriers and make the program more accessible to a broad range of producers and new types of partners.

These updates included flexibility for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance, along with an investment in additional staff to work directly with partners. Through CREP, for the first time ever, three Tribal Nations are now partnering with USDA to help conserve, maintain, and improve grassland productivity, reduce soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat.

## **Grassland CRP**

FSA will announce the dates for Grassland CRP signup in the coming weeks. 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.

## **How to Sign Up**

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

## **More Information**

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.

# Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2023 livestock losses, you must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. You then must provide the following supporting documentation to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 250 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application for payment by March 1, 2024.

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

## USDA Announces Signup for Crop and Revenue Loss Assistance for Agricultural Producers

Signup begins January 23 for additional emergency relief from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the [Emergency Relief Program](#) (ERP) Phase Two.

To be eligible for Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Eligible crops include both traditional insurable commodities and specialty crops that are produced in the United States as part of a farming operation and are intended to be commercially marketed. This also includes losses of eligible on-farm stored commodities. ERP Phase 2 applicants will use the following tax years when selecting allowable gross revenue:

- Benchmark years: 2018 and/or 2019; estimated for new producers with no 2018 or 2019 revenue or adjusted if the benchmark years are not representative of the disaster year due to a change in operation size.
- Disaster years: 2020 and/or 2021. The allowable gross revenue for the specific disaster year will be based on the tax year applicable to that revenue (2020, 2021 or 2022).

The ERP tool assists producers in calculating allowable gross revenue, as well as adjusted revenue for the benchmark years 2018 and 2019, and allowable gross revenue for representative tax years 2020-2022 which represent disaster years 2020 and 2021. Once producers complete the allowable gross revenue entries, they are able to print forms FSA-521 and FSA-521A through this tool.

The ERP Phase 2 and PARP application period is open from January 23 through June 2, 2023.

For more information on payment calculations, payment limitations or how to determine allowable gross revenue, please reference the [ERP Phase 2 fact sheet](#).

## USDA Announces Signup for Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program

The Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) will assist eligible producers of agricultural commodities who experienced revenue decreases in calendar year 2020 compared to 2018 or 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. PARP will help address gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses.

USDA's Farm Service Agency will accept PARP applications from January 23, 2023, through June 2, 2023.

### Eligible and Ineligible Commodities

For PARP, eligible agricultural commodities include crops, aquaculture, livestock, livestock byproducts, or other animals or animal byproducts that are produced as part of a farming operation and are intended to be commercially marketed. This includes only commodities produced in the United States or those produced outside the United States by a producer located in the United States and marketed inside the United States.

The following commodities **are not eligible** for PARP:

- Wild free-roaming animals.
- Horses and other animals used or intended to be used for racing or wagering.
- Aquatic species that do not meet the definition of aquaculture.
- *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of that plant that does not meet the definition of hemp.
- Timber.

### Program Eligibility

PARP payments will be made on a whole-farm basis, not commodity-by-commodity. To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and must have experienced a 15 percent decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020, as compared to either:



- The 2018 or 2019 **calendar year**, *as elected by the producer*, if they received allowable gross revenue during the 2018 or 2019 **calendar years**, or
- The producer's expected 2020 calendar year allowable gross revenue, if the producer had no allowable gross revenue in 2018 or 2019.

PARP payments will be issued after the application period ends on June 2, 2023.

For more information on determining allowable gross revenue visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus/pandemic-assistance/parp](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus/pandemic-assistance/parp) or review the [PARP fact sheet](#).

### More Information

To apply for PARP, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

## USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](#) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

### Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.



- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit [farmers.gov](#) and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).

## 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 USDA Service Center.

## Borrower Training for Farm Loan Customers

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency (FSA) customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicants develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.

## Submit Loan Requests for Financing Early

The Farm Loan team in your local County is already working on operating loans for spring 2023 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.

## USDA Announces Availability of Inflation Reduction Act Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture

USDA is making funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices.

The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA) provided an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements. NRCS is making available \$850 million in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

The IRA funding includes an additional \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for RCPP, \$3.25 billion for CSP, and \$1.4 billion for ACEP. The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers apply conservation to millions of acres of land. Additionally, the IRA provides \$300 million to quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gases (GHG) through the collection and use of field-based data to assess conservation outcomes. Information gained through this effort will be used to improve practices and technical assistance to customers. Further guidance on this important work will be provided as the implementation of this portion of the IRA continues.

These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. To ensure we can quantify

the benefits of these IRA investments, NRCS is working to support Department-wide work on Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MMRV). The IRA provided targeted funding to support this effort. In administering the Inflation Reduction Act climate investments, USDA will also support other environmental co-benefits, including – among other things – water conservation, wildlife habitat improvements, and reducing runoff.

### How to Apply

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but producers interested in **EQIP** or **CSP** should apply by [their state's ranking dates](#) to be considered for funding in the current cycle. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.

For **ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)** or **Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)**, applications for the current IRA funding cycle must be submitted by **March 17, 2023**, for the first funding round. This year, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-ALE for grasslands in areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores. Meanwhile, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-WRE for eligible lands that contain soils high in organic carbon.

NRCS plans to roll out the next **RCPP** funding opportunity in early spring, which will include IRA funds from fiscal year 2023.

Other opportunities for agreements and partnerships at the state level will be announced for fiscal year 2023 in the coming months. The IRA provides funding to support those strategic partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. This will include outreach to underserved producers to ensure IRA climate funding is reaching those who have been previously unable to access conservation assistance.

## Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers

A multi-agency guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available. If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you. This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency. [Download the guide here](#). The guide is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on [farmers.gov/translations](https://farmers.gov/translations).



## USDA in South Dakota

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