

April 2021



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

GovDelivery

Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [A Note from Acting State Executive Director Tyeisha Samples](#)
- [USDA Expands and Renews Conservation Reserve Program](#)
- [USDA Supports Military Veteran's Transition to Farming](#)
- [FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options](#)
- [Share Your Planting Season Experience for #Plant2021](#)
- [FSA Opens CFAP 2 Signup for Additional Enrollment; Updates Additional CFAP Provisions](#)

Tennessee FSA Newsletter

Tennessee Farm Service Agency

579 U.S. Courthouse
801 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37203

Phone: 615-277-2600
Fax: 855-494-7764

www.fsa.usda.gov/tn

Acting State Executive Director:

Tyeisha L. Samples

State Committee:

Steve Officer, Chair
Daryl Brown
Charlotte Kelly

A Note from Acting State Executive Director Tyeisha Samples

April showers bring May flowers, or so we are hoping! This month most likely finds you preparing or in the midst of spring planting, a time of hope and investment in the future of your farming operation.

Please make sure that you read below about the improvements USDA has made in our Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). It may be a good option for you to check out, along with our multiple other conservation programs. Make sure you touch base with your local FSA service center so you can see what programs and loans may help you with ongoing improvements.

Deepest Regards,

Tyeisha (Ty) L. Samples

Acting Tennessee State Executive Director

Renea Jones Rogers
Brian Flowers

To find contact information for
your local office go to
www.fsa.usda.gov/tn

USDA Expands and Renews Conservation Reserve Program

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that USDA will open enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with higher payment rates, new incentives, and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. Additionally, USDA is announcing investments in partnerships to increase climate-smart agriculture, including \$330 million in 85 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) projects and \$25 million for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials. Secretary Vilsack made the announcement today at the White House National Climate Task Force meeting to demonstrate USDA's commitment to putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change.

The Biden-Harris Administration is working to leverage USDA conservation programs for climate mitigation, including continuing to invest in innovation partnership programs like RCP and On-Farm Trials as well as strengthening programs like CRP to enhance their impacts.

Conservation Reserve Program

USDA's goal is to enroll up to 4 million new acres in CRP by raising rental payment rates and expanding the number of incentivized environmental practices allowed under the program. CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with a long track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, and reducing nitrogen runoff, as well providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

CRP is a powerful tool when it comes to climate mitigation, and acres currently enrolled in the program mitigate more than 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). If USDA reaches its goal of enrolling an additional 4 million acres into the program, it will mitigate an additional 3 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent and prevent 90 million pounds of nitrogen and 33 million tons of sediment from running into our waterways each year.

CRP's long-term goal is to establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, improve soil health and carbon sequestration, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a number of signups, including the general signup and continuous signup, which are both open now, as well as a CRP Grasslands and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water.

New Climate-Smart Practice Incentive

To target the program on climate change mitigation, FSA is introducing a new **Climate-Smart Practice Incentive** for CRP general and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP 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.

Higher Rental Rates and New Incentives

In 2021, CRP is capped at 25 million acres, and currently 20.8 million acres are enrolled. Furthermore, the cap will gradually increase to 27 million acres by 2023. To help increase producer interest and enrollment, FSA is:

- **Adjusting soil rental rates.** This enables additional flexibility for rate adjustments, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increasing payments for Practice Incentives from 20% to 50%.** This incentive for continuous CRP practices is based on the cost of establishment and is in addition to cost share payments.
- **Increasing payments for water quality practices.** Rates are increasing from 10% to 20% for certain water quality benefiting practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers, and filter strips.
- **Establishing a CRP Grassland minimum rental rate.** This benefits more than 1,300 counties with rates currently below the minimum.

Enhanced Natural Resource Benefits

To boost impacts for natural resources, FSA is:

- **Moving State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practices to the CRP continuous signup.** Unlike the general signup, producers can sign up year-round for the continuous signup and be eligible for additional incentives.
- **Establishing National Grassland Priority Zones.** This aims to increase enrollment of grasslands in migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas.
- **Making Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) practices available in both the general and continuous signups.**

Expanding Prairie Pothole Soil Health and Watershed Programs

CRP has two pilot programs — the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) and the Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers 30-year contracts (CLEAR30).

- For SHIPP, which is a short-term option (3, 4, or 5-year contracts) for farmers to plant cover on less productive agricultural lands, FSA will hold a 2021 signup in the Prairie Pothole states.
- The CLEAR30 pilot, a long-term option through CRP, will be expanded from the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay pilot regions to nationwide.

Increasing Technical Assistance Capacity and Impact Measurement

USDA technical assistance through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is critical to enable producers to plan and implement conservation practices that are appropriate for their needs. To ensure increased enrollment and support for producers, USDA is increasing NRCS technical assistance capacity for CRP by \$140 million.

Additionally, in order to better target the program toward climate outcomes, USDA will invest \$10 million 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.

To learn more about updates to CRP, download our “What’s New with CRP” [fact sheet](#).

Partnership Programs Contribute to Priorities

In addition to changes to CRP, Secretary Vilsack also announced significant investments for climate-smart policies. First, NRCS is investing \$330 million in 85 locally driven, public-private partnerships under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to address climate change and other natural resources challenges. NRCS will announce more details on the RCPP project selections on April 26.

Second, NRCS is investing \$25 million in proposals for On-Farm Trials, which are part of the Conservation Innovation Grants program. NRCS is seeking proposals through June 21. Project priorities include climate-smart agricultural solutions and soil health practices.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation’s lands, biodiversity, and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including state, local, and tribal governments.

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 safe, 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 Supports Military Veteran’s Transition to Farming

Are you a military veteran interested in farming? USDA offers resources to help you:

- **Fund Your Operation:** USDA’s Farm Service Agency offers a variety of [funding opportunities](#) to help agricultural producers finance their businesses. Certain funds are targeted for veterans and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- **Conserve Natural Resources:** USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service offers [conservation programs and expert one-on-one technical assistance](#) to strengthen agricultural operations now and into the future. Veterans may be eligible for a cost share of up to 90 percent and advance payments of up to 50 percent to cover certain conservation practices.
- **Manage Risks:** USDA is here to help you prepare for and recover from the unexpected. Veterans who are beginning farmers may be eligible for reduced premiums, application fee waivers, increased insurance coverage, and other incentives for multiple [USDA programs that support risk management](#).

USDA wants to ensure that veterans transitioning to agriculture have the resources needed to succeed. While USDA offices are currently closed to visitors because of the pandemic, Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. To conduct business, please contact your local USDA Service Center. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus. If you're a new farmer, you can also reach out to your [state Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator](#).

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.

Share Your Planting Season Experience for #Plant2021

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

FSA Opens CFAP 2 Signup for Additional Enrollment; Updates Additional CFAP Provisions

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that signup has reopened for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) as part of the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. The initial CFAP 2 signup ended on Dec. 11, 2020, but USDA has reopened sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning April 5, 2021, for producers to apply or make modifications to existing CFAP 2 applications.

CFAP 2 provides direct financial relief to producers due to market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19. CFAP 2 payments will be made for three categories of commodities – Price Trigger Commodities, Flat-rate Crops and Sales Commodities. Visit farmers.gov/cfap/commodities for a full list of eligible commodities for each category.

Price Trigger Commodities Price trigger commodities are major commodities that meet a minimum 5-percent price decline over a specified period of time. Eligible price trigger crops include barley, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, upland cotton, and all classes of wheat. Payments will be based on 2020 planted acres of the crop, excluding prevented planting and experimental acres.

For broilers and eggs, payments will be based on 75 percent of the producers' 2019 production.

Dairy (cow's milk) payments will be based on actual milk production from April 1 to Aug. 31, 2020. The milk production for Sept. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2020, will be estimated by FSA.

Eligible beef cattle, hogs and pigs, and lambs and sheep payments will be based on the maximum owned inventory of eligible livestock, excluding breeding stock, on a date selected by the producer, between April 16, 2020, and Aug. 31, 2020.

Flat-rate Crops Crops that either do not meet the 5-percent price decline trigger or do not have data available to calculate a price change will have payments calculated based on eligible 2020 acres multiplied by \$15 per acre. These crops include alfalfa, extra long staple (ELS) cotton, oats, peanuts, rice, hemp, millet, mustard, safflower, sesame, triticale, rapeseed, and several others.

Sales Commodities Sales commodities include specialty crops; aquaculture; nursery crops and floriculture; other commodities not included in the price trigger and flat-rate categories, turfgrass sod; pullets; goat milk; mink (including pelts); mohair; wool; and other livestock (excluding breeding stock), not included under the price trigger category that were grown for food, fiber, fur, or feathers. Payment calculations will use a sales-based approach, where producers are paid based on five payment gradations associated with their 2019 sales, and crop insurance indemnities, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), and Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) payments for crop year 2019.

Applying for CFAP 2

Visit farmers.gov/cfap for details on all eligible commodities, producer eligibility, payment limitations and structure and additional program resources.

Producers have multiple options to apply for CFAP 2, including through an online application portal and by working directly with the FSA office. Customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Additional CFAP Payments for Beef and Row-Crop Producers

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorizes an increase in CFAP 1 payment rates for cattle. Cattle producers with approved CFAP 1 applications will automatically receive these payments and do not need to submit a new application since payments are based on previously approved CFAP 1 applications. Producers may be asked for additional information depending on how they filed the original application. Information on the additional payment rates for cattle can be found on farmers.gov/cfap.

This act also authorized additional CFAP assistance of \$20 per acre for producers of eligible CFAP 2 flat-rate or price trigger commodities. FSA will automatically issue payments to eligible producers based on the eligible acres included on their CFAP 2 applications. Eligible producers do not need to submit a new CFAP 2 application.

Additional CFAP Actions FSA has also begun payment processing applications filed as part of the CFAP Additional Assistance program in the following categories:

- Applications filed for pullets and turfgrass sod;
- A formula correction for row-crop producer applications to allow producers with a non-Actual Production History (APH) insurance policy to use 100% of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County Option (ARC-CO) benchmark yield in the calculation; and

- Sales commodity applications revised to include insurance indemnities, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments, and Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus payments.

Additional payments for swine producers and contract growers under CFAP Additional Assistance remain on hold and are likely to require modifications to the regulation as part of the broader evaluation and future assistance; however, FSA will continue to accept applications from interested producers.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).