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USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
Number of truckloads you normally haul.
Normal mileage per truckload.
Share of normal feed cost.

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a [tutorial video](#) is available.

**Updates to ELAP**

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

- Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor; or
- Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.

**Payment Calculations**

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of $6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

**Eligibility**

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.

**More Drought Recovery Information**

USDA has taken additional steps to assist drought-impacted producers, including:

- [Extending deadlines for crop insurance premium and administrative fees, and deferring interest accrual.](#)
- [Streamlining and accelerating losses and issuance of indemnity payments for crop insurance.](#)
- [Investing $41.8 million through a four-state pilot of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts focused on drought practices.](#)
- [Investing $15 million through a block grant to the Klamath Drought Response Agency to provide payments to producers to reduce irrigation demand.](#)

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can
Progression Lending from FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans are considered progression lending. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Our goal is to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. FSA staff will advise borrowers on developing strategies and a plan to meet your goals and graduate to commercial credit. FSA borrowers are responsible for the success of their farming operation, but FSA staff will help in an advisory role, providing the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks

The Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps you manage risk through coverage for both crop losses and crop planting that was prevented due to natural disasters. The eligible or “noninsured” crops include agricultural commodities not covered by federal crop insurance.

You must be enrolled in the program and have purchased coverage for the eligible crop in the crop year in which the loss incurred to receive program benefits following a qualifying natural disaster.

NAP Buy-Up Coverage Option

NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested.

Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

NAP Service Fees

For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, “Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification.”

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.
USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for USDA funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). Applications for eligible certification expenses paid between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021, are due Nov. 1, 2021.

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA’s National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Producers can be reimbursed for expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

For 2021, OCCSP will reimburse 50 percent of a certified operation’s allowable certification costs, up to a maximum of $500 for each of the following categories or “scopes:”

- crops
- wild crops
- livestock
- processing/handling
- State organic program fees.

Organic farmers and ranchers may apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the OCCSP webpage, visit usda.gov/organic, or contact your local USDA Service Center.

USDA Launches First Phase of Soil Carbon Monitoring Efforts through CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing $10 million in a new initiative to sample, measure, and monitor soil carbon on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to better quantify the climate outcomes of the program. CRP is an important tool in the Nation’s fight to reduce the worst impacts of climate change facing our farmers, ranchers, and foresters. This initiative will begin implementation in fall 2021 with three partners. Today’s announcement is part of a broader, long-term soil carbon monitoring effort across agricultural lands that supports USDA’s commitment to deliver climate solutions to agricultural producers and rural America through voluntary, incentive-based solutions.

These models include the Daily Century Model, or DayCent, which simulates the movement of carbon and nitrogen through agricultural systems and informs the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. Data will also be used to strengthen the COMET-Farm and COMET-Planner tools, which enable producers to evaluate potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reductions based on specific management scenarios.

USDA partners will conduct soil carbon sampling on three categories of CRP practice types: perennial grass, trees, and wetlands.

Perennial grasses: In consultation with USDA, Michigan State University will sample and measure soil carbon and bulk density of CRP grasslands (including native grass plantings, rangelands, and pollinator
habitat plantings) at an estimated 600 sites across the U.S. with a focus in the central states during this five-year project. This information will be used to model and compare the climate benefits of CRP. Partners include the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Deveron, an agriculture technology company, and Woods End Laboratories.

**Trees:** Mississippi State University will partner with Alabama A&M University to collect above and below ground data at 162 sites across seven states documenting CRP-related benefits to soil and atmospheric carbon levels. Information will help further calibrate the DayCent model. This five-year project will focus within the Mississippi Delta and Southeast states.

**Wetlands:** Ducks Unlimited and its partners will collect data on carbon stocks in wetland soils as well as vegetation carbon levels at 250 wetland sites across a 15-state area in the central U.S. Data will support the DayCent and additional modeling. Partners for this five-year project include: Migratory Bird Joint Venture, Intertribal Research and Resource Center at United Tribes Technical College, Clemson University, Kenyon College, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Missouri, and the University of Texas at Austin.

**CRP Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation Projects**

These three Climate Change Mitigation Assessment Initiative projects are funded through FSA’s program to work with partners to identify Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (MAE) projects to quantify CRP environmental benefits to water quality and quantity, wildlife, and rural economies.

Applications for projects were welcome from all organizations, including public, private, nonprofit institutions, and educational institutions including historically Black colleges and universities, Tribal colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions or organizations.

For more details on the all the awarded MAE projects, visit the FSA Monitoring Assessment & Evaluation webpage.

**About the Conservation Reserve Program**

CRP is one of the world’s largest voluntary conservation programs, with an established track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, reducing nitrogen runoff and providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, agricultural producers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. In general, land is enrolled in CRP for 10 to 15 years, with the option of re-enrollment. FSA offers multiple CRP signups, including the general signup and continuous signup, as well as Grassland CRP and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water. In 2021, producers and landowners enrolled more than 5.3 million acres in CRP signups, surpassing USDA’s 4-million-acre goal.

Earlier this year, USDA announced updates to CRP including higher payment rates, new incentives for environmental practices, and a more targeted focus on the program’s role in climate change mitigation. This included 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. Download the “What’s New” fact sheet to learn more about CRP updates.

**More Information**

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 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 healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and other producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities.
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.

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest. You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by visiting the RMA website.

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center at or visit fsa.usda.gov.

FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also
set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

**USDA Unveils New Climate Partnership Initiative, Requests Public Input**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to partnering with agriculture, forestry and rural communities to develop climate solutions that strengthen rural America. The Department has outlined and requested public comments on a new climate partnership initiative designed to create new revenue streams for producers via market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices.

Guided by science, USDA will support a set of pilot projects that provide incentives to implement climate-smart conservation practices on working lands and to quantify and monitor the carbon and greenhouse gas benefits associated with those practices. The Department published a Request for Information (RFI) seeking public comment and input on design of the new initiative. Stakeholders interested in providing comments may do so on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on November 1, 2021, via the Federal Register, Docket ID: USDA-2021-0010.

**Application Period Opens for Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program to Provide Relief to Small Producers, Processors, Distributors and Farmers Markets Impacted by COVID-19**
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced a Request for Applications (RFA) for the new Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant program and encourages eligible entities to apply now for funds. Applications must be submitted electronically through the grant portal at https://usda-prs.grantsolutions.gov/usda by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, November 22, 2021. Approximately $650 million in funding is available for the PRS grants, which are funded by the Pandemic Assistance provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

The PRS Grant program will assist small businesses in certain commodity areas, including specialty crop producers, shellfish farming, finfish farming, aquaculture, and apiculture; specialty crop, meat, and other processors; distributors; and farmers markets. Small businesses and nonprofits in these industries can apply for a grant to cover COVID-related expenses such as workplace safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment (PPE), retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety, shifting to online sales platforms, transportation, worker housing, and medical costs. The minimum funding request is $1,500 and the maximum funding request is $20,000.

The RFA and the PRS Grant Portal provide more details about eligibility for the grant. Eligible entities are required to obtain a free DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) before applying for this program. USDA has created a custom PRS DUNS number portal at https://support.dnb.com/?CUST=PandemicResponse.

Application resources, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), tip sheets in English and Spanish on applying for a DUNS Number, videos on “How to Apply” and more, are available on the PRS Grant Portal.

For more information, you can also reach out to the PRS help desk, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. ET at (301) 238-5550 or usda.ams.prs@grantsolutions.gov.

Check your eligibility, obtain a DUNS number, and learn more about the application process at the PRS Grant Portal.

FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy

The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide you with interim financing after harvest to help you meet cash flow needs without having to sell your commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 202X MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.

Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to Adjusted Gross Income provisions.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, you must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at your local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.
Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that if your total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds $900,000, then you’re not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. You must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information and additional eligibility requirements, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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**Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage**

For the 2021 and subsequent crop years, NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

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**FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans**

The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership loans can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a Direct Farm Ownership Microloan option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is $600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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