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OTECP Deadline Approaching

As a part of the [Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative](#), the U.S. Department of Agriculture created the [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program \(OTECP\)](#) to provide pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses to agricultural producers who are certified organic or transitioning to organic. **The deadline to apply for 2020 and 2021 OTECP has been extended to February 4, 2022.**

Eligible Expenses

Certified operations and transitional operations may apply for OTECP for eligible expenses paid during the 2020, 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. The 2020 and 2021 OTECP signup ends soon and the 2022 OTECP signup will be announced at a later date. For each year, OTECP covers 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category (crop, livestock, wild crop, handling and State Organic Program fee). This includes application fees, inspection fees, USDA organic certification costs, state organic program fees and more.

Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. This includes fees charged by a certifying agent or consultant for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan.

For both certified operations and transitional operations, OTECP covers 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the expense of soil testing required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

Applying for Assistance

Producer interested in applying should contact their local FSA office before the signup deadline on **February 4, 2022**. For one-on-one support with applications, please call 877-508-8364. Visit farmers.gov/otecp to learn more.

Additional Organic Support

OTECP builds upon USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) which provides cost share assistance of 50%, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope, to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the NOP. Although the application period for OCCSP ended Nov. 1, 2021, FSA will consider late-filed applications for those operations who still wish to apply.

Meanwhile, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) recently [made improvements to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) to make it more flexible and accessible to organic producers. Updates include increasing expansion limits for organic producers to the higher of \$500,000 or 35%. Previously, small and medium size organic operations were held to the same 35% limit to expansion as conventional practice producers. Also, producers can now report acreage as certified organic, or as acreage in transition to organic, when the producer has requested an organic certification by the acreage reporting date.

To learn more about USDA's assistance for organic producers, visit usda.gov/organic.

Sign Up for 2022 Dairy Margin Coverage and Supplemental DMC

Dairy producers can now enroll in the 2022 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program. This voluntary program offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. The 2022 DMC program will provide coverage for the entire 2022 calendar year. **The deadline to enroll in the 2022 DMC program is February 18, 2022.**

Alongside DMC, USDA is also offering Supplemental DMC, a program created to provide \$580 million to better help small- and mid-sized dairy operations that have increased production over the years but were not able to enroll the additional production. Eligible dairy operations that sign up for Supplemental DMC will be able to retroactively receive payments

for that supplemental production. The deadline to apply for Supplemental DMC is February 18, 2022. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) updated how feed costs are calculated, which will make the program more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses.

Supplemental DMC Enrollment

Eligible dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of established production history may enroll supplemental pounds based upon a formula using 2019 actual milk marketings, which will result in additional payments. Producers will be required to provide FSA with their 2019 Milk Marketing Statement.

Supplemental DMC coverage is applicable to calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023. Participating dairy operations with supplemental production may receive retroactive supplemental payments for 2021 in addition to payments based on their established production history.

Supplemental DMC will require a revision to a producer's 2021 DMC contract and must occur before enrollment in DMC for the 2022 program year. Producers will be able to revise 2021 DMC contracts and then apply for 2022 DMC by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#).

DMC 2022 Enrollment

After making any revisions to 2021 DMC contracts for Supplemental DMC, producers can sign up for 2022 coverage. DMC provides eligible dairy producers with risk management coverage that pays producers when the difference between the price of milk and the cost of feed falls below a certain level. So far for the 2021 calendar year, DMC payments have triggered for January through October for more than \$1.0 billion.

For DMC enrollment, producers must certify with FSA that the operation is commercially marketing milk, sign all required forms and pay the \$100 administrative fee. The fee is waived for farmers who are considered limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged, or a military veteran. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

Updates to Feed Costs

USDA is also changing the DMC feed cost formula to better reflect the actual cost dairy farmers pay for high-quality alfalfa hay. FSA will calculate payments using 100% premium alfalfa hay rather than 50%. The amended feed cost formula will make DMC payments more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses. Updated 2020 and 2021 DMC payments were made in December to reflect these calculation changes.

Additional Dairy Assistance

USDA is also amending Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP) regulations to add provisions for the indemnification of cows that are likely to be not marketable for longer durations, as a result, for example, of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. FSA also worked closely with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to target assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and other conservation programs to help producers safely dispose of and address resource concerns created by affected cows. Other

recent dairy announcements include \$350 million through the Pandemic Market Volatility Assistance Program and \$400 million for the Dairy Donation Program.

More Information

To learn more or to participate in dairy programs available through USDA, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some are open to limited visitors. Producers should contact their Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

2021 Crop Production Reporting Deadlines for NAP Covered Honey, Tree Fruits, Berries, and Grapes Approaching

Reporting of actual harvested production from the 2021 crop year is a requirement for producers who obtained Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage. To retain program eligibility for NAP covered crops, participating producers must annually report actual production to keep NAP program benefits and ensure the NAP actual production history (APH) reflects accurate yield data. Producers with 2021 NAP covered honey must report total harvested production by **January 3, 2022** for all honey produced during the 2021 calendar year. Producers of 2021 NAP covered tree fruits (apples, apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums), nuts, blueberries, cranberries, and grapes must report actual harvested production by **January 18, 2022**.

If actual harvested production for NAP covered crops is not timely submitted to your local county FSA office, NAP benefits for crop losses will not be earned and the NAP yield could begin to drop significantly, affecting your future NAP coverage levels. To report production, complete and sign form CCC-452 obtained from your local FSA county office. If you have any questions about production reporting or NAP payment requirements, contact your county FSA office.

Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers Through SMHPP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new program to assist hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale during the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers. FSA will accept SMHPP applications through **Feb. 25, 2022**.

SMHPP provides assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020. Negotiated sale, or negotiated formula sale, means a sale of hogs by a producer to a packer under which the base price for the hogs is determined by seller-buyer interaction and agreement on a delivery day. USDA is offering SMHPP as

packer production was reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic due to employee illness and supply chain issues, resulting in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices.

The Department has set aside up to \$50 million in pandemic assistance funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for SMHPP.

SMHPP Program Details

Eligible hogs include hogs sold through a negotiated sale by producers between April 16, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020. To be eligible, the producer must be a person or legal entity who has ownership in the hogs and whose production facilities are located in the United States, including U.S. territories. Contract producers, federal, state and local governments, including public schools and packers are not eligible for SMHPP.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. FSA will issue payments to eligible hog producers as applications are received and approved.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP starting Dec. 15, 2021, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/smhpp for a copy of the Notice of Funds Availability, information on applicant eligibility and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Marketing Assistance Loans, Loan Deficiency Payments, and Certificates Available

FSA Marketing Assistance Loans are available for harvested commodities. A loan can provide you with interim financing to meet cash flow needs without selling your harvested crop at a time when market prices are at harvest-time lows. Your 2021 harvested farm-stored or warehouse-stored commodity is used as collateral for the loan. Marketing Assistance Loans mature 9 months after the month loan funds are disbursed to you, with repayment due at loan maturity. Before moving farm-stored loan collateral, you must contact the county FSA office and obtain an authorization to move the collateral. Producers who have a commodity pledged as collateral for a marketing assistance loan can purchase a commodity certificate that can be immediately exchanged for the outstanding loan collateral in situations when the loan rate exceeds the exchange rate. Producers who are eligible for marketing assistance loans can obtain a loan deficiency payment (LDP) in lieu of a loan. LDP's are available when the posted county price for a crop falls below the county loan rate. You can check the daily LDP rates online at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/index>.

For a commodity to be eligible for a loan, loan deficiency payment, or certificate, you must have beneficial interest in the commodity which is defined as having title, possession, and

control of the commodity. The quality of stored collateral must be maintained, and you are responsible for loss or damage to the commodity through the term of the loan. To retain eligibility for an LDP when beneficial interest in your harvested crop will be lost upon delivery, **you must file form CCC-633 EZ Page 1 with your local FSA office prior to loss of beneficial interest.**

Marketing assistance loans or loan deficiency payments are available for wheat, barley, oats, corn, dry peas, lentils, small chickpeas, large chickpeas, grain sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, rapeseed, canola, safflower seed, flaxseed, mustard seed, crambe, sesame seed, graded and non-graded wool, mohair, and honey. Unshorn pelts are available for an LDP only. If you are interested, please contact [your local FSA county office](#) to learn more about Marketing Assistance

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling, or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always contact your local county FSA office before you haul any grain under loan.

Election and Enrollment for 2022 ARC/PLC Program

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. Elections and enrollment for 2021 ARC/PLC began on **October 18, 2021 and will run through March 15, 2022.**

The 2018 Farm Bill allows for changes to the farm election for 2022. Any producers wishing to make changes to the farm election must obtain signatures from all producers on the farm with an interest in the farm's cropland acres (excluding CRP) for the new election to be considered valid. Producers may elect to enroll in PLC, ARC-CO, or ARC-IC programs for 2022. Elections to PLC or ARC-CO are made on a covered commodity by covered commodity basis and all covered commodity base acres are elected into ARC-IC if that program is chosen for a farm.

Failure to agree to an election change for 2022 by **March 15, 2022** will result in the farm defaulting to the election made in the 2021 program year.

The 2018 Farm Bill provides that for farms on which all cropland was planted to grass or pasture, including cropland that was idle or fallow, from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2017 will have all base acres and payment yields maintained, but with no payment for those base acres during the years 2019 through 2023. Farms that reported all grass, idle, or fallow during that entire period may be eligible for an NRCS program.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally funded projects before a project is approved.

For all FSA programs, an environmental review must be completed before actions, such as site preparation or ground disturbance are approved. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans.

If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

USDA Expands Partnerships for Conservation Through Its Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is leveraging its authorities under the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to bring in new types of partners and ultimately expand opportunities in voluntary conservation for the Nation's agricultural producers and private landowners. In direct response to feedback from state agencies, Tribes, non-profits and other groups, USDA has updated CREP's rule regarding matching fund requirements, and invested in additional staff to work directly with partners for streamlined, partner-driven conservation efforts.

CREP is part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and enables USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), through Farm Service Agency (FSA), and partners to co-invest in partner-led projects. CREP also plays an important role in USDA's broader climate change strategy, bringing together producers, landowners and partners for climate-smart land management.

Matching Funds

A Dec. 6, 2019, rule required that 50% of matching funds from partners be in the form of direct payments, which made it more difficult for diverse types of groups to participate as partners in CREP. With this rule change, partners can now provide their negotiated level of matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance. This change allows for greater flexibility and opportunity for additional partners to participate in the program.

This change was enacted through a [Dec. 13, 2021 rule in the Federal Register](#).

The rule also updated policy to now provide a full annual rental rate to producers who are impacted by state, Tribal or local laws, ordinances and regulations that require a resource

conserving or environmental protection measure. The previous rule reduced the rental payment made to producers who were covered by such laws.

About CREP

Currently, CREP has 34 projects in 26 states. In total, more than 860,000 acres are enrolled in CREP.

Eligible partners include States, Tribal groups, and non-governmental organizations. Potential partners interested in CREP should contact their FSA [State Office](#) or one of the new CREP team members listed above.

Currently, all CREP partners are States; however, FSA is strongly encouraging Tribes and non-governmental organizations to consider partnerships. This program is a great vehicle for their conservation-focused efforts.

More Information

Earlier this year, FSA rolled out a number of improvements to CRP, which included a larger emphasis on climate-smart agriculture through a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP general and continuous signups. Learn more in our [“What’s New with CRP” fact sheet](#). These updates to CREP build on FSA’s larger effort to improve all components of CRP.

To learn about CREP and other CRP opportunities, producers and landowners should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

Reminder for Deadlines to Submit Applications for Livestock Programs

Deadlines for livestock applications are quickly approaching. Producers must file all supporting documentation and the application for payment by the applicable deadline for each program as mentioned below. Eligible producers under the LIP and ELAP programs must have filed a Notice of Loss within 30 days (15 days for honeybee losses) of when the loss became apparent, and the losses must have been due to an eligible adverse weather event.

- Livestock Forage Program (LFP) – **January 31st, 2022**
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) – **January 31st, 2022**
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) - **March 1st, 2022**

Producers should contact their local FSA Office to file all supporting documentation and the final application for payment.

USDA Service Centers are Here to Help!

One-on-One Assistance for Farmers and Ranchers, Free of Charge

At USDA, we are committed to helping farmers complete loan applications, environmental reviews, and other paperwork free of charge. One-on-one support is available at more than 2,300 USDA Service Centers nationwide. USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff are usually co-located at these Service Centers, and can help guide farmers to the best USDA assistance based on their unique goals, whether it is loans, conservation programs, or insurance.

Service Center staff can guide farmers through the process of preparing and submitting required paperwork on their own, with no need to hire a paid preparer. Language translation service is available in all USDA Service Centers, so one-on-one assistance with a Service Center employee can be translated in real time for farmers requiring it. And while some program and loan applications do have an administrative fee for filing, there is never a charge for preparation services provided by USDA staff.

Farmers who come to the USDA Service Center can:

- Establish their farm by registering for a farm number, which is required for USDA programs and assistance.
- Learn how to meet conservation compliance provisions.
- Verify eligibility for USDA programs.
- Discuss their business and conservation goals.
- Create a conservation plan.
- Fill out and file loan and program applications.

To find the nearest USDA Service Center, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>.

Acreage Reporting - Have you completed yours?

Washington growers and FSA participants are reminded that annual acreage reports to FSA are a general program requirement. As we enter into the new calendar year, growers of Apples, Apricots, Blueberries, Cherries, Cranberries, Grapes, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears and Plums must report your planted acreage before January

15, 2022 to have the report considered timely filed.

Growers who planted fall planted crops, had a deadline of December 15, 2021. Those that got the job done ahead of the deadline, we want to say Thanks. Several producers were placed on registers because of the current heavy workload in our county offices. It is extremely important that you do not miss or delay your scheduled appointment as this could cause your report to be considered late filed.

County offices are still under visitor restrictions to some degree, so you may be asked to participate in your appointment through virtual teleconference. Although this is new to us all, it has proven to be a very effective way to get the job done and limit your exposure potential to Covid-19.

We are also trying to utilize electronic signatures to greatest extent possible. This is a very safe and effective way for us to do business with you. I strongly encourage everyone to participate in this process as much as possible. You will find getting your work with FSA out of the way from the comfort of your home a very good way to do business.

If you must file an acreage report for a previous year or missed one of our published dates. You may still be able to have your report considered timely filed. For your report to be considered timely filed by the County Committee you must initiate that request within 1 year of the published filing date.

The County Committee must review the results of a required farm visit to verify your reported acreage. If you are filing for a previous year, you may be required to provide additional documentation to support that the crop was planted and harvested.

Crop insurance agents have similar deadlines as FSA. Depending on the type of insurance you purchase, or the added endorsements to your policy, agents may or may not be required to provide your planted acres to their parent company at this time. Acreages must be on file with the company before FSA can use RMA cropping data to verify the acreage reported to us. Information provided by the agent is not acceptable proof of filing your acreage. If there is no record with the company, FSA will consider your filing after the deadline as late filed.

You will be assessed a fee for each farm you file after the deadline. This fee is to cover the added expenses that FSA incurs to make a site visit to your farm to verify the acreage data. The COC uses the results of this visit when determining if your report can be considered timely filed.

To avoid this added expense and to maintain program eligibility, all producers regardless of your program participation is encouraged to provide a complete and accurate acreage report each growing season. To file an acreage report, contact your local FSA office and schedule your appointment today.

Important Dates and Deadlines

January 1, 2022 – Newly elected county committee members take office.

January 3, 2022 – Deadline to obtain 2022 NAP coverage for honey.

January 3, 2022 – 2022 crop acreage reporting deadline for honey (full list of Washington State NAP dates posted [here](#)). 2021 NAP honey production due.

January 7, 2022 – Deadline to apply for 2020 and 2021 OTECP.

January 15, 2022 – Acreage Reporting deadline for Apples, Apricots, Blueberries, Cherries, Cranberries, Grapes, Nectarines, peaches, Pears and Plums

January 17, 2022 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. USDA Service Centers will be closed.

January 18, 2022 – 2022 crop acreage reporting deadline for apples, apricots, blueberries, cherries, cranberries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. 2021 NAP production due for all listed crops.

January 30, 2022 – Deadline to file a 2021 ELAP or LFP Application for Payment and provide supporting documentation.

January 30, 2022 – Deadline to file a 2021 ELAP Notice of Loss for 2021 livestock feed transportation, water transportation and honeybee feed losses that have occurred due to an eligible drought.

February 15, 2022 – Deadline to pay 2021 NAP Premiums.

February 18, 2022 – Deadline to sign up for Supplemental DMC and 2022 DMC.

February 21, 2022 – Presidents' Day. USDA Service Centers will be closed.

February 25, 2022 – Deadline for hog producers to apply for SMHPP for negotiated sales which occurred from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020.

March 1, 2022 – Deadline to file a 2021 LIP Application for Payment and provide supporting documentation.

March 15, 2022 – Deadline to elect a program and enroll in 2022 ARC/PLC.

March 15, 2022 – Deadline to obtain 2022 crop year NAP coverage for artichokes, beets (for seed or fresh), buckwheat, camelina, carrots (for fresh or processing), hemp, mustard, radish (for seed or fresh), small grain forage (wheat, barley, oats, peas), and any other spring planted crops not mentioned in other closing dates (full list of Washington State NAP dates posted [here](#)).

March 31, 2022 – Final date to request a MAL for 2021 wheat, barley, oats, honey, canola, crambe, flaxseed, rapeseed, and sesame seed.

July 15, 2022 – All spring planted crops, CRP contract acreages, and perennial forage crops.

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