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 help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For details, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center.

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**Disaster Assistance for 2021 Livestock Forage Losses**

Producers in Park County are eligible to apply for 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on native pasture.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land, or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and submit the required supporting documentation no later than January 20, 2022, for 2021 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the Park County USDA Service Center at (307) 754-9411, Ext. 2.
Higher Loan Limit Now Available for USDA Guaranteed Farm Loans

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a higher loan limit will be available for borrowers seeking a guaranteed farm loan starting Oct. 1, 2021, from $1.776 million to $1.825 million.

FSA farm loans offer access to funding for a wide range of producer needs, from securing land to financing the purchase of equipment. Guaranteed loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

In fiscal year 2021, FSA saw continued strong demand for guaranteed loans. FSA obligated more than $3.4 billion in guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans. This includes nearly $1.2 billion for beginning farmers. The number of guaranteed borrowers has grown by 10% to more than 38,750 farmers and ranchers over the last decade. FSA expects the increasing demand for farm loans to continue into fiscal year 2022.

Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP)

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program is a state-driven program that matches an experienced producer who is passionate about conservation with an NRCS field employee that is new to the job or new to the area.

Our goal through the program is to grow critical relationships with the producers we serve, while at the same time advancing employee knowledge of production agriculture and natural resources in their local area, ultimately enhancing our ability to provide excellent customer service.

Once matched with a producer mentor, the employee will go out on the land with them 6-12 times per year for a period of 12-18 months – always during agreed upon times that are convenient for the producer.

Producer mentors provide a safe, low-risk learning environment for employees to advance their knowledge of:

· Common agricultural practices, equipment, inputs and other topics.
· The types of daily challenges and decisions producers face.
· Local resource problems and concerns.
· How producers use conservation practices to address resource concerns. For more information on the CAMP program, check out our Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions. Contact your local CAMP Coordinator to speak with someone directly or to sign-up to become a mentor.
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Tim Acord - Vice-Chairperson  
Lynn George - Regular Member

Next County Committee Meeting: TBD