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USDA Climate Hubs

The USDA Climate Hubs translate climate science into action, putting USDA research and resources into practice. The Hubs develop and deliver science-based, region-specific information and technology to natural resource and agricultural managers to help you make climate-informed decisions that reduce agricultural risk and build resilience to climate change. Our useful tools can help you plan for and manage weather- and climate-related risks.

The Climate Hubs offer a variety of resources to help you manage weather and climate-risks, including tools and technology, outreach and education, and risk assessments:

- Tools and technology to help you respond effectively to climate change impacts including drought, extreme weather events, and changing growing seasons. We provide coordinated technical support to enhance USDA program delivery, especially to underserved and vulnerable communities.

The following tools can help you make informed management decisions on your operation:

- **Adaptation Workbook**: A flexible process to consider the potential effects of climate change and design land management and conservation actions to prepare for changing conditions.
- **Grass-Cast**: A grassland and forage productivity forecast for ranchers and rangeland managers.
- **AgRisk Viewer**: A new platform to access, analyze, and visualize historical crop insurance loss data to inform risk management efforts.
- **Seedlot Selection Tool**: A web-based mapping application that uses current or future climates to match seedlots and planting sites.
- Outreach, education, and technical support on innovative ways to help lower barriers to adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building:
  - **Hurricane preparedness and recovery commodity guides**: Guides to help producers prepare for and recover from hurricane events.
  - **‘As If You Were There’ 360 Demonstrations**: A unique collection of virtual field tours to experience how others are adapting to and mitigating extreme weather and climate-driven events.
  - **Pacific Northwest Biochar Atlas**: Science-based guidance regarding biochar and its benefits, decision-support tools for biochar application, and case studies from early adopters.
- **Regional assessments of risk and vulnerability** and user-friendly information and data to support risk management and climate change response.
The Climate Hubs are a unique collaboration that connects USDA research and program agencies like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Risk Management Agency (RMA), Economic Research Service, and Foreign Agricultural Service, among others.

We support USDA stakeholders by providing vulnerability assessments, curating decision-making tools, and facilitating stakeholder outreach on climate change and its impacts on working lands.

The Climate Hubs also amplify the work of other USDA agencies to ensure USDA is meeting the needs of customers like you.

- For example, the Southwest Climate Hub worked with RMA to provide more accessible, discoverable, and usable crop insurance data through the AgRisk Viewer.
- Our Northern Plains Climate Hub developed a grassland and forage productivity model and rangeland drought dashboard working closely with agencies and partners.
- At our Northeast Climate Hub, the NRCS liaison developed a webinar training titled “Helping farmers help the land through climate-smart farming” highlighting NRCS resource concerns and practices.

There are 10 regional Climate Hubs across the nation co-located at Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) research units. To find your regional Climate Hub contacts visit climatehubs.usda.gov/contact. For more information on the Climate Hubs, visit climatehubs.usda.gov. We are happy to help connect producers, USDA staff, and stakeholders to each other and to the best resources USDA has to offer.

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**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.

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**USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online**

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA’s Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.
Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer’s personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you’re interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit farmers.gov/mydocs to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

To learn more about program flexibilities and Service Center status during the coronavirus pandemic, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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**New to Farming Because of the Pandemic? USDA Can Help**

USDA Service Centers across the country, are hearing from people who are interested in more space and working the land and we want to let you know we can help. Are you new to farming because of the pandemic? USDA can help you get started in farming – on everything from helping you register your farm to getting financial assistance and advice.

**Get Started with USDA**

First, you want to make sure your farm is registered. If you purchased land, it might already be established with USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) with a farm number on file. If not, FSA can help you register your farm.

To obtain a farm number, you'll bring an official tax ID (Social Security number or an employer ID) and a property deed. If you do not own the land, bring a lease agreement to your FSA representative to show you have control of the property. If your operation is incorporated or an entity, you may also need to provide proof that you have signature authority and the legal ability to enter into contracts with USDA.

**Access to Capital**

USDA can provide access to capital through its farm loans, which is a great resource when producers aren’t able to get a loan from a traditional lender. Loans can help with purchasing land or equipment or with operating costs, and FSA even offers microloans, which are especially popular among producers with smaller farms. For more information, check out our Farm Loan Discovery Tool.

**Conservation Practices**

We can help you make conservation improvements to your farm, which are good for your bottom line and your operation. We’ll help you develop a conservation plan and apply for financial assistance that’ll cover the bulk of the costs for implementing. To learn more about some of the conservation practices that we help producers with, check out our Conservation at Work Video Series.
If you purchase land, and you don’t want to farm all of it, you can look at either a conservation easement or managing for native shrubs and grasses through either the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Easements are long-term, while a CRP contract is 10-15 years. These are good options for land that is not optimal for production or sensitive lands like wetlands and grasslands.

**Additional Resources**

Depending on your farm, you may want to look at crop insurance. The USDA’s Risk Management Agency provides crop insurance to help you manage risks on your farm. There are many types of insurance products available for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

Your local communities also have great resources for farmers including conservation districts, Rural Development, cooperative extensions, and different farming groups. To get started with USDA, contact your local USDA service center

**Wyoming State Office**

951 Werner Ct Ste 130  
Casper, WY 82601  

Phone: 307-261-5231