USDA to Provide Payments to Livestock Producers Impacted by Drought or Wildfire

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that ranchers who have approved applications through the 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for forage losses due to severe drought or wildfire in 2021 will soon begin receiving emergency relief payments for increases in supplemental feed costs in 2021 through the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) new Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP).

**Background**

On September 30, 2021, President Biden signed into law the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act* (P.L. 117-43). This Act includes $10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wild fires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the Act specifically targets $750 million to provide assistance to livestock producers for losses incurred due to drought or wildfires in calendar year 2021. ELRP is part of FSA’s implementation of the Act.

For impacted producers, USDA will leverage LFP data to deliver immediate relief for increases in supplemental feed costs in 2021. LFP is an important tool that provides up to 60% of the estimated replacement feed cost when an eligible drought adversely impacts grazing lands or 50% of the monthly feed cost for the number of days the producer is prohibited from grazing the managed rangeland because of a qualifying wildfire.

FSA received more than 100,000 applications totaling nearly $670 million in payments to livestock producers under LFP for the 2021 program year.

Congress recognized requests for assistance beyond this existing program and provided specific funding for disaster-impacted livestock producers in 2021.

**ELRP Eligibility – Phase One**

To be eligible for an ELRP payment under phase one of program delivery, livestock producers must have suffered grazing losses in a county rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks or a D3 (extreme drought) or higher level of drought intensity during the 2021 calendar year, and have applied and been approved for 2021 LFP. Additionally, producers whose permitted grazing on federally managed lands was disallowed due to wildfire are also eligible for ELRP payments, if they applied and were approved for 2021 LFP.
As part of FSA’s efforts to streamline and simplify the delivery of ELRP phase one benefits, producers are not required to submit an application for payment; however, they must have the following forms on file with FSA within a subsequently announced deadline as determined by the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs:

- CCC-853, Livestock Forage Disaster Program Application
- Form AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet.
- Form CCC-902, Farm Operating Plan for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, Member Information for Legal Entities (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, Request for an Exception to the $125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification, if applicable, for the 2021 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification) for the ELRP producer and applicable affiliates.

**ELRP Payment Calculation – Phase One**

To further expedite payments to eligible livestock producers, determine eligibility, and calculate an ELRP phase one payment, FSA will utilize livestock inventories and drought-affected forage acreage or restricted animal units and grazing days due to wildfire already reported by the producer when they submitted a 2021 CCC-853, Livestock Forage Disaster Program Application form.

Phase one ELRP payments will be equal to the eligible livestock producer’s gross 2021 LFP calculated payment multiplied by a payment percentage, to reach a reasonable approximation of increased supplemental feed costs for eligible livestock producers in 2021.

The ELRP payment percentage will be 90% for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers and ranchers, and 75% for all other producers. These payments will be subject to a payment limitation.

To qualify for the higher payment percentage, eligible producers must have a CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification, form on file with FSA for the 2021 program year.

Payments to eligible producers through phase one of ELRP are estimated to total more than $577 million.

**ELRP - Phase Two**

Today’s announcement is only Phase One of relief for livestock producers. FSA continues to evaluate and identify impacts of 2021 drought and wildfire on livestock producers to ensure equitable and inclusive distribution of much-needed emergency relief program benefits.

**Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Assistance for Crop Producers**

FSA is developing a two-phased process to provide assistance to diversified, row crop and specialty crop operations that were impacted by an eligible natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 or 2021.

This program will provide assistance to crop producers and will follow a two-phased process similar to that of the livestock assistance with implementation of the first phase in the coming weeks. Phase one of the crop assistance program delivery will leverage existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program data as the basis for calculating initial payments.
Making the initial payments using existing safety net and risk management data will both speed implementation and further encourage participation in these permanent programs, including the Pasture, Rangeland, Forage Rainfall Index Crop Insurance Program, as Congress intended.

The second phase of the crop program will be intended to fill additional assistance gaps and cover eligible producers who did not participate in existing risk management programs.

Through proactive communication and outreach, USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as ERP implementation details are made available.

**Additional Livestock Drought Assistance**

Due to the persistent drought conditions in the Great Plains and West, FSA will be offering additional relief through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/ELAP) to help ranchers cover above normal costs of hauling livestock to forage. This policy enhancement complements previously announced ELAP compensation for hauling feed to livestock. Soon after FSA announced the assistance for hauling feed to livestock, stakeholders were quick to point out that producers also were hauling the livestock to the feed source as well and encouraged this additional flexibility.

It is important to note that, unlike ELRP emergency relief benefits which are only applicable for eligible losses incurred in the 2021 calendar year, this ELAP livestock and feed hauling compensation will not only be retroactive for 2021 but will also be available for losses in 2022 and subsequent years.

To calculate ELAP program benefits, an [online tool](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/ELAP) is currently available to help producers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation cost increases caused by drought and will soon be updated to assist producers with calculations associated with drought related costs incurred for hauling livestock to forage.

**More Information**

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producer impacted by [drought](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Drought) and [wildfire](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Wildfire) and the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet, and Farm Loan Discovery Tool. For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Service_Center). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/CropInsurance).

**USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records**

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

Farmers.gov now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.
Managing USDA Business Online

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you’ll will need a USDA eAuth account to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit farmers.gov and sign into the site’s authenticated portal via the Sign In/Sign Up link at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including “Get Involved,” “Common Forms,” and “Translations.” Learn more about these changes.

NRCS is Now Accepting Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Big Game Conservation Applications

EQIP Big Game Conservation Applications must be received by Wednesday June 22, 2022

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wyoming is currently accepting applications for EQIP Big Game Conservation. EQIP is a voluntary Farm Bill program which provides financial assistance to address priority resource concerns. This sign up is to address resource concerns related to conserving wildlife and migration corridors and to keep working lands working.

Producers interested in implementing conservation practices to conserve, restore, and enhance wildlife habitat important for migratory big game populations on their private lands have until Wednesday June 22, 2022, to submit applications.

The EQIP Big Game Conservation sign-up provides benefits for Wyoming producers through incentivizing conservation practices such as Wildlife Friendly Fencing, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, Brush Management, Fence Removal, Pest Management, Wet Meadow Restoration, Prescribed Grazing, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, and Brush or Aspen treatments. Supporting practices are not listed but may be included as needed to support terrestrial wildlife habitat projects.

This opportunity is available to all Producers who own or manage private agricultural land within the State of Wyoming.

High Priority Areas Include:

1. Private Land located within State Designated Migration Corridors
• Migration Corridors as designated by WY Game and Fish Department.

• Private Land located in Fremont, Hot Springs, Lincoln, Park, Sublette, and Teton County

• These counties were targeted in the Grassland CRP program to enhance wildlife habitat in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and are part of a pilot that allows producers to stack CRP and EQIP contracts, provided the producer will not receive cost-share payments for the same practice from both agencies, on the same land.

**Producers must have farm records current with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and submit a complete program application to NRCS to be considered for financial assistance through EQIP.** If producers do not currently have up-to-date farm records with FSA they have until Friday, June 24, 2022, to establish such records with their local FSA office. Applications are accepted at all Wyoming NRCS offices located in USDA Service Centers across the state. To find out more information about EQIP please visit the [Wyoming EQIP webpage](#). To locate an NRCS field office near you, please visit the [Wyoming USDA Service Center webpage](#).

When visiting with NRCS staff about the EQIP Big Game Conservation sign-up, landowners are encouraged to inquire about NRCS’ comprehensive conservation plans. The Agency continually strives to put conservation planning at the forefront of its programs and initiatives. Conservation plans provide landowners with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of their land, as well as suggestions for improving the quality of soil, water, air, plants, and animals on their land.

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**USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Equity**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating its farm loan programs to better support current borrowers, including historically underserved producers. These improvements are part of USDA’s commitment to increase equity in all programs, including farm loans that provide important access to capital for covering operating expenses and purchasing land and equipment.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized FSA to provide equitable relief to certain direct loan borrowers, who are non-compliant with program requirements due to good faith reliance on a material action of, advice of, or non-action from an FSA official. Previously, borrowers may have been required to immediately repay the loan or convert it to a non-program loan with higher interest rates, less favorable terms, and limited loan servicing.

Now, FSA has additional flexibilities to assist borrowers in such situations. If the agency provided incorrect guidance to an existing direct loan borrower, the agency may provide equitable relief to that borrower. FSA may assist the borrower by allowing the borrower to keep their loans at current rates or other terms received in association with the loan which was determined to be noncompliant or the borrower may receive other equitable relief for the loan as the Agency determines to be appropriate.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local loan officials to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available that can assist them in starting, expanding or maintaining their operation.

**Additional Updates**

Equitable relief is one of several changes authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill that USDA has made to the direct and guaranteed loan programs. Other changes that were previously implemented include:

• Modifying the existing three-year farming experience requirement for Direct Farm Ownership loans to include additional items as acceptable experience.

• Allowing socially disadvantaged and beginning farmer applicants to receive a guarantee equal to 95%, rather than the otherwise applicable 90% guarantee.

• Expanding the definition of and providing additional benefits to veteran farmers.
• Allowing borrowers who received restructuring with a write down to maintain eligibility for an Emergency loan.
• Expanding the scope of eligible issues and persons covered under the agricultural Certified Mediation Program.

Additional information on these changes is available in the March 8, 2022 rule on the Federal Register.

More Background

FSA has taken other recent steps to increase equity in its programs. Last summer, USDA announced it was providing $67 million in competitive loans through its new Heirs’ Property Relending Program to help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs’ land ownership and succession issues. FSA also invested $4.7 million to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers, which contributed to a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers in the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2), a key pandemic assistance program, since April 2021.

Additionally, in January 2021, Secretary Vilsack announced a temporary suspension of past-due debt collection and foreclosures for distressed direct loan borrowers due to the economic hardship imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Producers can explore available loan options using the Farm Loan Discover Tool on farmers.gov (also available in Spanish) or by contacting their local USDA Service Center. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Due to the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Producers can contact their local Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment to discuss loan options.
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