USDA Makes Acreage Reporting Improvements to Allow Flexibility for Urban and Innovative Producers

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Acreage Reports are Eligibility Requirement for Many USDA Programs

Idaho

WASHINGTON, Oct. 22, 2024 - Urban and innovative agriculture producers will be able to more easily participate in U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs as a result of acreage reporting improvements. These improvements, implemented by USDA's Farm Service Agency, provide more flexibility for reporting acreage on a smaller scale and identifying innovative planting practices like multi-level planting or vertical farming practices.

An acreage report documents crops and where they are grown on a farm or ranch along with the intended use of the crop. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of program benefits.

"Through USDA's urban agriculture initiative and the opening of USDA offices within urban settings, our Farm Service Agency offices are more frequently engaging with urban and innovative producers," said Zach Ducheneaux, FSA Administrator. "Filing an acreage report is an important requirement to receive many USDA program benefits, and our small-scale agricultural producers, including urban and innovative producers, will notice a simpler acreage reporting process that better reflects the scope of their unique operations."

Acreage Reporting Improvements

FSA's acreage reporting software previously allowed acreage to be reported down to .0001 acres, approximately a four-square foot area. Producers will now be able to report acreage-based crops at a minimum size of .000001 acre, approximately a 2.5-inch by 2.5-inch area.

Additional improvements will distinguish alternate growing methods such as crops grown within multiple levels of a building, or crops grown using multi-level or multi-layer growing structures such as panels or towers within a container system. This change allows the distinction of vertical farming practices. Urban and innovative producers will also have the option to report plant inventory along with their acreage-based report, allowing producers to better report the full scope of their operation.

Producers can contact FSA at their local USDA Service Center for acreage reporting deadlines that are specific to their county.

USDA Urban Service Centers

USDA is committed to working with farms of all sizes and in all locations, including those in urban areas. USDA works with agricultural producers through a network of more than 2,300 Service Centers nationwide. To better serve urban farmers, USDA is establishing 17 new Urban Service Centers.

The Urban Service Centers are staffed by FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees and offer farm loan, conservation, disaster assistance and risk management programs.

To find exact locations and contact information for these Urban Service Centers or to learn how to prepare for a USDA Service Center appointment, producers can visit farmers.gov/your-business/urban-growers/urban-service-centers.

For questions, producers should call their FSA county office. Urban operations that are not located near one of the Urban Service Centers can contact one of the more than 2,300 Service Centers across the country by visiting farmers.gov/service-locator.

More Information

The new acreage reporting improvements and Urban Service Centers are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture and innovative production. Other efforts include:

- Investing $9 million in funding to local organizations that will conduct outreach, education and technical assistance to urban producers and support the urban service centers in 10 cities.
- Organizing 27 FSA urban county committees to make important decisions about how FSA farm programs are administered locally. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting for county committee members.
- Investing $5.2 million for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) competitive grants in fiscal year 2024
- Administering the People's Garden Initiative, which celebrates collaborative gardens across the country and worldwide that benefit their communities by growing fresh, healthy food and supporting resilient, local food systems using sustainable practices and providing greenspace.

- Creating and managing a Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to advise the Secretary on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban agriculture. The committee will hold a virtual public meeting on Oct. 23. To learn more, register here.
- Providing cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing in risk management education to broaden the reach of crop insurance among urban and innovative producers.
- Partnering with the Vermont Law and Graduate School Center for Agriculture and Food Systems to develop resources that help growers understand and work through local policies.

Additional resources include:

- USDA's urban agriculture website;
- Urban producers webpage on farmers.gov;
- Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure; and
- Innovative Production at a Glance brochure.

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

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 producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America and committing to equity across the department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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