USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in Texas Impacted by Wildfire

News Release | Texas | March 17, 2026

Texas

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, March 17, 2026 - Agricultural operations in Texas have been significantly impacted by recent wildfires. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events.

"USDA has a suite of programs to support farmers and ranchers as they recover from disasters," said Farm Production and Conservation Under Secretary Richard Fordyce. "I encourage impacted producers to contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages."

USDA Disaster Assistance

Producers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality or sell injured livestock at a reduced price may be eligible for the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). To participate in LIP, producers will have to provide acceptable documentation of death losses or evidence of reduced sales resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 calendar year losses.

Meanwhile, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses. For ELAP, producers are required to submit a notice of loss and application for payment to their local FSA office no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 calendar year losses.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines. TAP complements the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes or vines is apparent.

"Once producers are safely able to determine and report their losses or damages, our local Farm Service Agency staff can help producers with program applications related to wildfire recovery," said

Dan Hunter, State Executive Director for FSA in Texas. "As you evaluate losses on your operation, take time to gather important documents you may need to apply for assistance including farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses. FSA staff will do their best to work with the loss documentation records you have available."

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed farm loans, including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low interest emergency loans to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.

Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) provides low-interest financing so producers can build, repair, replace or upgrade facilities to store commodities (including hay storage facilities). Loan terms vary from three to 12 years. Producers who incurred damage to or loss of their equipment or infrastructure funded by the FSFL program should contact their insurance agent and their local USDA Service Center. Producers in need of on-farm storage should also contact USDA.

Risk Management

Producers with NAP coverage should report crop damage to their local FSA office and must file a Notice of Loss (CCC-576) within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Producers with risk protection through Federal Crop Insurance should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days.

"Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are offered to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future," said Franco Trevino, Deputy Director of USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) Regional Office that covers Texas. "Disasters can be trying for producers, and they should stay in close contact with their crop insurance agent. Producers can be assured that the Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events."

Conservation

Outside of the primary nesting season, emergency and non-emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by natural disasters.

To increase access to forage for wildfire-impacted producers, FSA recently authorized emergency use of CRP acres authorizing all counties in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas to donate grazing rights or haying authority for to livestock producers affected by the wildfires. Emergency haying and grazing is available until the beginning of the primary nesting season (PNS). The PNS date varies by state. The PNS has started in Texas, but producers have the option to use CRP acres in other states. Producers should contact their local FSA office to determine eligibility, availability and stocking rates or to donate emergency haying and grazing rights to producers in need of forage access.

FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) can assist landowners with financial and technical assistance to remove debris from cropland or pastureland to restore the land back to production. Through the program, FSA can provide fence restoration or replacement assistance including livestock cross fences, boundary fences, cattle gates or wildlife exclusion fences on agricultural land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is always available to provide technical assistance during the recovery process by assisting producers in planning conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can help producers implement conservation practices on land impacted by natural disasters.

"At USDA, we serve as a partner to help landowners with their resiliency and recovery efforts," said Kristy Oates, NRCS State Conservationist in Texas. "Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop methods that focus on effective recovery of the land."

Assistance for Communities

Additional NRCS programs include the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, which assists local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as debris removal and streambank stabilization.

Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. Sponsors must submit a formal request (by mail or email) to the NRCS state conservationist for assistance within 60 days of the natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available. For more information, sponsors should contact their local NRCS office.

In addition to EWP, Conservation Technical Assistance is another valuable service that NRCS can provide following a wildfire. NRCS technical assistance can help fire victims with planning cost-effective post fire restoration practices.

More Information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by wildfire. Those resources include the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool, Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet, Loan Assistance Tool, and Natural Disasters and Crop Insurance fact sheet. Additionally, FarmRaise offers an FSA educational hub with LIP and ELAP decision tools as well as farm loan resource videos. For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local USDA Service Center. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their crop insurance agent.

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