USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in Wisconsin Impacted by Drought

News Release | Wisconsin | September 08, 2026

Wisconsin

(Madison, WISCONSIN. September 8, 2026) - Agricultural operations in Wisconsin have been significantly impacted by recent drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from this adverse weather event.

"We know current drought conditions are adversely impacting crops, land, water supplies and livestock, creating financial and emotional strain for the farmers and ranchers we serve," said Farm Production and Conservation Under Secretary Richard Fordyce. "I encourage producers to stay in close contact with their local USDA Service Center to report losses and damages and learn more about the many program options we have available to assist them in building drought resiliency and navigating drought recovery."

USDA Disaster Assistance

Livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land may be eligible for the 2026 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP). To participate in LFP, producers must own, cash or share lease, or contract grow eligible livestock; provide pasture or grazing land to eligible livestock on the beginning date of the qualifying drought; and certify that they suffered a grazing loss due to drought. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintains a dashboard for LFP eligibility. When visiting the dashboard, users must select an eligible pasture type before filtering by state and county. 2026 eligible pasture types for Wisconsin include: Native Pasture (Grass NAG), Annual Ryegrass, Forage Sorghum, Full Season Improved Pasture, Full Season Improved Mixed Pasture.

Wisconsin Counties currently eligible for LFP include: Ashland, Iron, Bayfield, Douglas, Burnett, Washburn, Rusk, Sawyer, Price, Oneida, Vilas, Pierce, Pepin, and St. Croix.

Additional counties may meet the qualifying drought threshold if drought conditions persist.

Producers who have a risk in the pasture or hay crop must submit an acreage report to the FSA for all grazing land for which a grazing loss is being claimed. LFP applicants who lease acres must be able to support their application with either a written lease or an *Annual Lease Certification* (form CCC-855).

Producers must submit an LFP application for payment and supporting documentation no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 losses.

Meanwhile, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for above normal costs of hauling water and feed to livestock as well as transporting livestock to forage or other grazing acres.

ELAP also assists commercial apiarists who experience a loss of feed due to drought conditions that may need to purchase short-term feed to sustain the honeybees until additional natural feedstock becomes available. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintains a list of counties eligible for ELAP and makes updates each Thursday.

Wisconsin Counties currently eligible for ELAP include: Ashland, Iron, Bayfield, Douglas, Burnett, Washburn, Rusk, Sawyer, Price, Oneida, Vilas, Pierce, Pepin, Lafayette, Green, Shawano, Waupaca, Portage, Marathon, Lincoln, Langlade, Menominee, Oconto, Marinette, and Forest

Additional counties may meet the qualifying drought threshold if drought conditions persist.

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.

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.

Risk Management

Producers with NAP coverage, including native grass for grazing, 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. Producers should stay in close contact with their crop insurance agent.

Conservation

For drought recovery, FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) can help farmers and ranchers implement emergency water conservation measures including watering systems for livestock and existing irrigation systems for orchards and vineyards. Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) can assist landowners and nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) stewards with financial assistance to restore damaged NIPF acres.

Outside of the primary nesting season (PNS), 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 a severe drought. Emergency grazing may continue during the PNS with a 50% reduction in the stocking rate, provided the county where the CRP is located is eligible for LFP. Producers should contact their local FSA office to determine eligibility, availability and stocking rates.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help farmers make their operation more resilient in the face of drought in future years. Through conservation planning and practices that will improve soil health and water conservation, farmers can reduce future crop loss due to drought and enhance resiliency. Financial help for implementing conservation practices may be available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Long-term damage from drought can include forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased wind erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices. Producers can visit their local USDA Service Center to learn more about these impacts, potential recovery tactics and how to take steps to make their land more resilient to drought in the future.

U.S. Drought Monitor

The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is an online, weekly map showing the location, extent, and severity of drought across the United States. The USDM provides producers with the latest information about drought conditions where they live, enabling producers to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers.

USDA uses the Drought Monitor to determine a producer's eligibility for certain drought assistance programs, like LFP, ELAP and Emergency Haying or Grazing on CRP acres. Additionally, FSA uses the Drought Monitor to trigger and "fast track" Secretarial Disaster Designations which then provides producers impacted by drought access to emergency loans that can assist with credit needs.

The USDM incorporates varying data including rain, snow, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, etc. as well as first-hand information submitted from on-the-ground sources such as photos, descriptions and experiences. You can contribute your observations to the USDM process using the Condition Monitoring Observer Report system or emailing droughtmonitor@unl.edu.

More Information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by drought. 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 an ELAP decision tool 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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