



## USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Montana Agricultural Producers Impacted by Recent Historic Blizzard

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### *Recovery Assistance Available for Livestock Losses*

**Bozeman, Mont., May 10, 2022** -Agricultural operations in Montana have been significantly impacted by a recent blizzard and major spring snowstorms. 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. Impacted producers should 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.

"The recent crippling winter weather events that blew through the Rockies and Northern Plains states during what is the heart of calving season for many ranchers, caused unfortunate livestock losses," said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). "We realize the devastating affect these adverse weather events can have on producers and their livestock. USDA employees stand ready to implement FPAC's extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services to all impacted producers."

### **USDA Disaster Recovery Assistance**

Producers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). To participate in LIP, producers will have to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

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 lost during the wildfires or drought. This complements [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.

"Once you can safely assess storm damages or loss, be sure to contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop, livestock, and farm infrastructure damages and losses," said Les J. Rispens, Acting State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Montana. "Important documentation such as farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses will be required to expedite FSA disaster assistance."

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 has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA for reasons beyond their control.

## **Risk Management**

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA's [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office, respectively. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a *Notice of Loss* (CCC-576) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

"Crop insurance and supportive USDA risk management options are there to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store," said Eric Bashore, Director of RMA's Regional Office that covers Montana. "The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters, and agents are experienced and well trained in handling these types of events."

## **Conservation**

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance for replacing or restoring fences as well as removing debris from farmland. FSA provides cost-share payments of up to 75% of the cost to implement approved restoration practices, and up to 90% for producers who certify as limited resource, socially disadvantaged or beginning farmers or ranchers. ECP sign-up periods will be announced by county, but producers can submit applications before signup begins.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is always available to provide technical assistance in the recovery process by assisting producers to plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters.

"There is NRCS technical assistance available to help Montana landowners recover from the recent winter storms," said Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist in Montana. "Our employees will assist landowners to assess any damages and develop approaches that focus on effective recovery or mitigation options."

NRCS conservation practices protect land from erosion, support disaster recovery and repair and can help mitigate loss from future natural disasters. Producers can visit their local USDA Service Center to learn more about recent natural disaster impacts and potential associated recovery tactics.

### **More Information**

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov), including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by [winter storms](#) 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](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

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 [www.usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov)

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