



## USDA Rallies Partners to Help with Outreach to Beginning, Veteran and Socially Disadvantaged Producers in Montana on the Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program

News Release | Montana | February 08, 2024

**WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, 2024** - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing almost \$1.8 million in cooperative agreements with six partner organizations for outreach and technical assistance to promote awareness and understanding of the [Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program](#) among agricultural communities. This includes a partnership with the [Trustees of Indiana University](#) that focuses on Montana producers.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers the program as an important tool to help beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers access land, as well as keep agricultural lands in production. These partnerships build on other efforts by USDA to increase equity in program delivery and broaden the reach of its programs to underserved producers.

"The Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program creates opportunities to ensure expiring Conservation Reserve Program contracts are used to support the next generation of producers by incentivizing transfer of land access and ownership. Connecting Conservation Reserve Program contract holders to beginning, veteran and underserved farmers and ranchers, as well as making sure landowners understand the program, its benefits and potential for positive, generational impact, is an ongoing challenge," said FSA Montana State Director, Maureen Wicks. "FSA is partnering with organizations like the [Trustees of Indiana University](#) to increase enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program by providing outreach and technical assistance to the agricultural community with a focus on increasing awareness about the program and a primary goal of connecting landowners and land seekers interested in program participation."

### **About the Project**

- [Trustees of Indiana University](#) - The project will build a clearer national understanding of the Transition Incentives Program's social and agro-ecological effects on the ground, and opportunities to dissolve barriers to participation for underserved farmers and farmers interested in ecologically sustainable farming practices. The project will focus on 18 priority Transition Incentives Program states: Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia and Washington. The project will look at who participates in the Transition Incentives Program, what takes place on Transition Incentives Program land, how lands convert from the Conservation Reserve Program to production, and how the Transition Incentives Program affects participating farmers' and

ranchers' entry into - and success in - agriculture. It will also clarify impediments to the Transition Incentives Program in places where the Conservation Reserve Program is prevalent, and opportunities to dissolve those impediments, by learning directly from farmers who do not participate in the Transition Incentives Program.

[Read for a full list of projects here.](#)

## About the Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program

The Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program provides assistance for landowners or operators to transition land expiring from the Conservation Reserve Program to a beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher for sustainable grazing or transition to crop production. The program pays owners or operators of land enrolled in an expiring Conservation Reserve Program contract up to two additional annual Conservation Reserve Program payments if they sell or lease their expiring Conservation Reserve Program land to an eligible non-family member. The producer gaining access or ownership to the land must return the land to production using sustainable grazing or crop production methods and be provided the opportunity to re-enroll some or all of the land into Conservation Reserve Program or enroll in the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Conservation Stewardship Program or Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

- A **beginning farmer or rancher** is one who has farmed or ranched 10 years or less, and materially and substantially participates in the operation.
- A **socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher** is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a group whose members have historically been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as a member of that group without regard to their individual qualities. For this program, gender is not included among these groups.
- A **veteran farmer or rancher** is a person who served in the Armed Forces and who has obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period, or who has not operated a farm or ranch, or operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years.

## More Information

Landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program are encouraged to contact FSA through their local USDA Service Center to learn more about the Conservation Reserve Program -Transition Incentives Program. Beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged producers interested in learning more about the Conservation Reserve Program-Transition Incentives Program or other resources to help them start or grow their farm operation are also encouraged to contact FSA at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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 safe, 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](http://www.usda.gov).

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