

Louisiana USDA-FSA Updates - May 2024

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From the Desk of the State Executive Director

- When natural disasters strike, USDA is here to help. USDA offers technical and financial assistance to help producers recover from droughts, hurricanes, wildfires, winter storms and more. USDA encourages farmers and ranchers to contact their local FSA office to timely report losses and learn which documents can help the local office expedite assistance, such as farm records, receipts and pictures of damages or losses. Local USDA service centers can be found at farmers.gov.
 - An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. 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. Acreage reporting deadlines vary by county and by crop. Producers can contact their FSA county office for acreage reporting deadlines that are specific to their county. FSA also has options for producers with login access to farmers.gov including several features that can help expedite acreage reporting, such as the ability to view, print and label maps.
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Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran or Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract holders are encouraged to transition their CRP acres to beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the landowner or operator for up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires.

CRP contract holders no longer need to be a retired or retiring owner or operator to transition their land. TIP participants must agree to sell, have a contract to sell, or agree to lease long term (at least five years) land enrolled in an expiring CRP contract to a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who is not a family member.

Beginning, veteran or social disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning two years before the expiration date of the CRP contract. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands. New landowners or renters that return the land to production must use sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information, contact your local Parish USDA Service Center at visit fsa.usda.gov.

New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and these [video tutorials](#).

More Information

Producers can make an appointment to report acres by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Disaster Assistance for 2024 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in multiple Parishes are eligible to apply for 2024 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on mixed forage and annual ryegrass or small grains.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2025, for 2024 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the local Parish USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Partners with FarmRaise to Offer Educational Tools and Resources to Promote Financial Access and Equity for Agricultural Producers

The U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) unveiled a new, online Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Decision Tool and farm loan resources available to agricultural producers and cooperators who help producers access USDA disaster assistance, farm loans and other federal farm programs. The new LIP tool and the farm loan informational video resources were developed in partnership with FarmRaise and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). These tools are now available at www.farmraise.com/usda-fsa.



Current FarmRaise Tools and Resources

[FarmRaise, Inc.](https://www.farmraise.com) has created an online, [educational hub](https://www.farmraise.com/educational-hub) -- called [Farm Service Agency 101](https://www.farmraise.com/farm-service-agency-101) -- comprised of videos, and resources that enable cooperators and the agricultural producers they serve to learn about and access major FSA programs.

The newly launched LIP Decision Tool assists livestock producers who suffered losses from eligible adverse weather events and other causes of loss as well as cooperators who are helping disaster-impacted livestock producers navigate available federal disaster assistance programs. The optional decision tool gives producers guidance on what is needed to gather and submit required loss documentation, reducing the amount of time needed to complete applications and enabling FSA county office staff to deliver much-needed assistance faster. Using this tool, however, is not an application for benefits or a determination of eligibility.

Through use of the LIP tool, livestock producers can provide supporting documentation, inventory numbers, and loss numbers to FSA county offices. Doing so, in advance of the initial county office visit, will help FSA staff serve customers more effectively and efficiently. Producers will also need to complete an application for LIP assistance and, upon request, may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation.

[LIP](#) offers payments to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by qualifying adverse weather events. LIP also covers losses due to eligible diseases

and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. This includes attacks by wolves and predatory birds.

In addition to the new LIP Decision Tool, the FarmRaise educational hub offers several, easily navigated farm loan programs how-to videos designed to introduce producers to FSA's many farm loan programs options and guide them through the application process.

More FSA program resources and tools will soon be added to the FarmRaise educational hub. Cooperators and agricultural producers are encouraged to visit the FarmRaise educational hub often to access all available resources.

About the Partnership

USDA cooperators are organizations on the frontlines of access and often are the first point of contact connecting farmers to USDA programs. The partnership between FarmRaise, Inc. and FSA, through a cooperative agreement, aims to improve producer participation and customer experience in USDA programs through education and technical assistance to young, beginning, and small-scale to mid-sized producers, producers with disabilities, and veterans.

By developing a digital educational hub that delivers free, user-friendly, producer and cooperator-tested resources USDA and FarmRaise, Inc. will help FSA expedite program delivery to agricultural producers. The hub offers how-to videos and visual aids that educate producers about FSA programs and prepares them for submitting applications for program participation.

More Information

For more information about FSA farm and farm loan programs, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local USDA Service Center - farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

USDA Approves Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance for Louisiana

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for the Agency's (FSA) Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) to address drought damages.

EFRP provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land to enable them to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. EFRP signup began on May 13, 2024 and end on July 12, 2024.

After applications are received, local FSA county committees determine land eligibility using on-site damage inspections that assess the type and extent of damage and approve applications.

Eligible forest restoration practices include debris removal, such as down or damaged trees, in order to establish a new stand or provide natural regeneration; site preparation, planting materials and labor to replant forest land; restoration of forestland roads, fire lanes, fuel breaks or erosion control structures; fencing, tree shelters and tree tubes to protect trees from wildlife damage; and wildlife enhancement to provide cover openings and wildlife habitat.



In order to meet eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land. The natural disaster must have resulted in damage that if untreated would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and/or materially affect future use of the land.

An environmental review must be completed before actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance.

For more information contact the Parish USDA Service Center or visit farmers.gov/recover.

USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Nominations open from May 7 to July 7, 2024

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking nominations for four positions on the [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production](#). USDA will accept nominations from May 7 to July 7, 2024. The 12-member Committee, which first convened in March 2022, is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country. Members of the Committee include representative from urban and innovative agricultural production, higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chain, and financing. Last year, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [appointed four new members](#) to the Committee to replace members whose terms expired. The Committee's last [public meeting](#) was held in April 2024.

Nominations

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise. Four positions are open for nominations including:

- One individual who is an agricultural producer or farmer using innovative technology.
- One individual representing an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub, or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.
- One individual representing related experience in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership must submit a nomination package including the following:

- A completed [background disclosure form \(Form AD-755\)](#) signed by the nominee.

- A brief summary explaining the nominee's interest in one or more open vacancies including any unique qualifications that address the membership composition and criteria described above.
- A resume providing the nominee's background, experience, and educational qualifications.
- Recent publications by the nominee relative to extending support for urban agriculture or innovative production (optional).
- Letter(s) of endorsement (optional).

Nomination packages must be submitted by email to UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov or postmarked by July 7, 2024. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to USDA NRCS, Attn: Brian Guse, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4083, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations. For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov.

Additional details are available in the [Federal Register notice](#).

More Information

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture and innovative production. The Committee is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture and innovative production. Other efforts include:

- Investing \$9.1 million for [Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production](#) competitive grants in fiscal year 2023.
- 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.
- Investing approximately \$11.5 million in [cooperative agreements](#) that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans in fiscal year 2023.
- Investing \$40 million, made possible by President Biden's American Rescue Plan, into partnerships with community-based organizations to that will conduct outreach, education and technical assistance to support urban producers.
- Investing in [risk management education](#) to broaden reach of crop insurance among urban and innovative producers.
- 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.
- Establishing 17 new [Urban Service Centers](#) staffed by FSA and NRCS employees where urban producers can access farm loan, conservation, disaster assistance and risk management programs.

- 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.

Learn more at www.usda.gov/urban. For additional resources available to producers, download the [Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure](#) or visit www.farmers.gov/urban.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under 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 throughout 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.

Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage

If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

Current Interest Rates for May

Interest rates for Operating and Ownership loans for **May 2024** are as follows:

- [Farm Operating Loans](#) (Direct): 5.250%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Direct): 5.500%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Direct, Joint Financing): 3.500%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Down Payment): 1.500%
- [Emergency Loan](#) (Amount of Actual Loss): 3.750%
- [Commodity Loans](#) (less than one year disbursed): 6.125%.
- [Farm Storage Facility Loans](#):
 - Three-year loan terms: 4.625%
 - Five-year loan terms: 4.375%
 - Seven-year loan terms: 4.375%
 - Ten-year loan terms: 4.375%
 - Twelve-year loan terms: 4.500%
- [Sugar Storage Facility Loans](#) (15 years): 4.625%

Important Dates

Jan. 15 - Nov. 30: Grazing Period for Full Season, **Mixed:** Both SSG and NSG Annual Reporting Date is (ARD) **Nov. 15**

Dec. 1 - May 1: Grazing Period for Full Season, **Annual:** Ryegrass and Small Grains Annual Reporting Date is (ARD) **Nov. 15**

Feb. 15 - Nov. 30: Grazing Period for Full Season, **Perennial:** Both Improved and Native Annual Reporting Date is (ARP) **Jul.15**

May 13 (sign up) - Oct. 31 (ends): Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

May 29: Deadline for application for payment for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) Grazing

May 31: Final Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) availability date for 2023 Cotton, Corn, Soybeans, Rice, and Grain Sorghum

Jul. 15: Acreage reporting deadline for most spring seeded crops and Conservation

Jul. 31: deadline for continuous CRP signup end date

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LOUISIANA STATE FSA COMMITTEE

Julie Baker-Richard-Chairperson
Brian Guidry-Member
Monica Hernandez-Member
Kristy Jones-Member
Willis Nelson-Member

The STC is scheduled to meet the second Tuesday of each month at the LA State Office, 3737 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302 unless the meeting is conducted virtually. Anyone wishing to attend should verify the meeting will take place as scheduled, by calling 318/473-7721.