



United States Department of Agriculture



## Alabama USDA November Newsletter

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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### ALABAMA Updates - November 2024

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## 2024 Farm Service Agency County

# Committee Elections Now Open

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) mailed ballots last week for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) [county committee elections](#) to all eligible agricultural producers and private landowners across the country. Elections are occurring in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these committee members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. Producers and landowners must return ballots to their local FSA county office or have their ballots postmarked by Dec. 2, 2024, for those ballots to be counted.

Producers must participate or cooperate in a USDA program and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Additionally, producers who are not of legal voting age, but supervise and conduct farming operations for an entire farm, are eligible to vote in these elections.

For purposes of FSA county committee elections, every member of an American Indian tribe is considered an agricultural landowner if the land on which the tribal member's voting eligibility is based is tribally owned or held in trust by the U.S. for the tribe, even if the individual does not personally produce a commodity on that land. Tribal agricultural landowners 18 years and older can contact their local FSA county office to register to vote.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. Each committee has from three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms, and at least one seat representing a LAA up for election each year. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster recovery, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues. They help ensure inclusive representation on committees and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their jurisdiction.

Ballots must be postmarked or delivered in person to the local FSA office by close of business Dec. 2, 2024, to be counted. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2025. Producers can identify LAAs up for election through a geographic information system locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) and may confirm their LAA by contacting their local FSA office. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail can request one from their local FSA county office.

## Urban County Committees

Urban county committees have been established in 27 cities to strengthen administration of FSA programs in urban areas. Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs, serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program

implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

The 27 cities with urban county committees are listed at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) and [farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban). Of these, ten urban county committees will hold an inaugural election this cycle.

Visit [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) for more information on county committee elections.

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## Impacted by frost, heat, fire, smoke and risks of the marketplace?

What happens when your most profitable crop is also your riskiest? That's the case for Jason Smith, a second generation winegrape grower in California's Salinas Valley. Jason says that putting food on your plate and wine in your glass also means putting crop insurance into his farm's business plan.

The winegrape business is one shot at one harvest. If that crop is lost, so is the whole year. For Jason crop insurance has been paramount, especially over the last 10 years. Through the support of USDA and RMA, Jason along with other wine grape growers, have a sense of security to know that if a catastrophic event happens, they are going to be able to survive and plant again the next year.

Watch Producers Behind the Policies Coast to Coast with the Risk Management Agency to learn how Jason overcomes the risks associated with growing winegrapes in California. We can drink to that! [<link to blog>](#)

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## USDA Extends Deadline for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Until December 13

USDA is extending the application deadline for the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) 2024 to Dec.13, 2024. This extension gives organic dairy producers two additional weeks to apply for the program. Eligible producers include certified organic dairy operations that produce milk from cows, goats and sheep.

ODMAP 2024 helps mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs, and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. Specifically, through ODMAP 2024, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is assisting organic dairy operations with projected marketing costs in 2024 calculated using their marketing costs in 2023.

### ODMAP 2024 Program Improvements

Dairy producers who participate in ODMAP 2024 will benefit from improvements to

Dairy producers who participate in ODMAP 2024 will benefit from improvements to provisions outlined in the program. Specifically, ODMAP 2024 provides a payment rate increase to \$1.68 per hundredweight compared to the previous \$1.10 per cwt. Additionally, the production cap has increased to nine million pounds compared to the previous five million pounds.

### **How ODMAP 2024 Works**

FSA is providing financial assistance for a producer's projected marketing costs in 2024 based on their 2023 costs. ODMAP 2024 provides a one-time cost-share payment based on marketing costs on pounds of organic milk marketed in the 2023 calendar year or estimated 2024 marketing costs for organic dairy operations that have increased milk production.

ODMAP 2024 provides financial assistance that immediately supports certified organic dairy operations during 2024 keeping organic dairy operations sustainable until markets return to more normal conditions.

### **How to Apply**

FSA is now accepting applications through Dec. 13. To apply, producers should contact FSA at their local USDA Service Center. To complete the ODMAP 2024 application, producers must certify pounds of 2023 milk production, show documentation of their organic certification and submit a completed application form.

Organic dairy operations are required to provide their USDA certification of organic status confirming operation as an organic dairy in 2024 and 2023 along with the certification of 2023 milk production or estimated 2024 milk production in hundredweight.

ODMAP 2024 complements other assistance available to dairy producers, including Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), with more than \$36 million in benefits paid for the 2024 program year to date. Learn more on the FSA Dairy Programs webpage.

### **More Information**

To learn more about USDA programs, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center. Producers can also prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and other programs by logging into their farmers.gov account. Producers without an account can sign up today.

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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

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## USDA Launches Online Debt Consolidation Tool to Increase Farmer And Rancher Financial Viability

For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made several impactful improvements including:

- The [Loan Assistance Tool](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.
- The [Online Loan Application](#), an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.
- An [online direct loan repayment feature](#) that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local USDA Service Center to pay a loan installment.
- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- A new [educational hub](#) with farm loan resources and videos.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local FSA farm loan staff to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available to assist with starting, expanding, or maintaining their agricultural operation. To conduct business with FSA, please contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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All federal job vacancies within USDA are posted on usajobs.gov. In order to further promote employment opportunities, we are going to start sending emails that highlight select positions.

If you want to keep up with vacancy announcements via email, you can subscribe to "Careers" by visiting [farmers.gov/subscribe](https://farmers.gov/subscribe) and completing the following steps.

- Select "email" as your subscription type
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Not all job vacancy announcements will be shared via email, but you can view a current list of all job openings at any time by visiting [usajobs.gov](https://usajobs.gov).

For additional information or assistance with your subscription, contact your local USDA Service Center by visiting [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

## ALABAMA USDA

**Farm Service Agency (FSA)**  
4121 Carmichael Road, Ste 600  
Montgomery, AL 36106  
**Phone: 334-279-3500**

**Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)**  
3381 Skyway Dr. Auburn, AL 36830  
**Phone: (334) 887-4500**

**Fax: 855-747-0599****Fax: (855)292-1671**Clifton Warren, **FSA State Director**Ben Malone, **NRCS State Conservationist****FSA State Committee**

Donald Means, Chairperson

Marvin Datcher

Gary Terry

William Townsend Kyser III

Danny Ellison

**Risk Management**

106 S. Patterson Street, Suite 250

Valdosta, GA 31601-5673

**Phone: 229-242-7235****Fax: (229) 242-3566**Davina Lee, **RMA Regional Director**

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