



Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Maryland FSA News - April 17, 2025

In This Issue:

- [USDA Expediting \\$10 Billion in Direct Economic Assistance to Agricultural Producers](#)
- [Seed and Vendor Finder Tool for CRP Participants and Native Seed Vendors](#)
- [USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property](#)
- [Applying for FSA Direct Loans](#)
- [USDA Designates Eighteen Maryland Counties as Primary Natural Disaster Areas for Drought; Additional Contiguous Disaster Counties also located in Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.](#)
- [The Importance of Responding to NASS Surveys](#)
- [High Tunnels Provide More Locally Grown Fresh Fruits, Veggies](#)
- [Lending Rates for April](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)

USDA Expediting \$10 Billion in Direct Economic Assistance to Agricultural Producers



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing up to \$10 billion directly to agricultural producers through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) for the 2024 crop year. Administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), ECAP

will help agricultural producers mitigate the impacts of increased input costs and falling commodity prices.

Authorized by the American Relief Act, 2025, these economic relief payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities for the 2024 crop year. To streamline and simplify the delivery of ECAP, FSA will begin sending pre-filled applications to producers who submitted acreage reports to FSA for 2024 eligible ECAP commodities soon after the signup period opens on March 19, 2025. Producers do not have to wait for their pre-filled ECAP application to apply. They can visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap to apply using a login.gov account or contact their local FSA office to request an application once the signup period opens.

Eligible Commodities and Payment Rates

The commodities below are eligible for these per-acre payment rates:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • Wheat - \$30.69 | Eligible oilseeds: |
| • Corn - \$42.91 | • Canola – \$31.83 |
| • Sorghum - \$42.52 | • Crambe – \$19.08 |
| • Barley - \$21.67 | • Flax - \$20.97 |
| • Oats - \$77.66 | • Mustard - \$11.36 |
| • Upland cotton & Extra-long staple cotton - \$84.74 | • Rapeseed - \$23.63 |
| • Long & medium grain rice - \$76.94 | • Safflower - \$26.32 |
| • Peanuts - \$75.51 | • Sesame - \$16.83 |
| • Soybeans - \$29.76 | • Sunflower – \$27.23 |
| • Dry peas - \$16.02 | |
| • Lentils - \$19.30 | |
| • Small Chickpeas - \$31.45 | |
| • Large Chickpeas - \$24.02 | |

Producer Eligibility

Eligible producers must report 2024 crop year planted and prevented planted acres to FSA on an FSA-578, *Report of Acreage* form. Producers who have not previously reported 2024 crop year acreage or filed a notice of loss for prevented planted crops must submit an acreage report by the Aug. 15, 2025, deadline. Eligible producers can visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap for eligibility and payment details.

Applying for ECAP

Producers must submit ECAP applications to their local FSA county office by Aug. 15, 2025. Only one application is required for all ECAP eligible commodities nationwide. ECAP applications can be submitted to FSA in-person, electronically using [Box and One-Span](#), by fax or by applying online at fsa.usda.gov/ecap utilizing a secure login.gov account.

If not already on file for the 2024 crop year, producers must have the following forms on file with FSA:

- [Form AD-2047](#), *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- [Form CCC-901](#), *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- [Form CCC-902](#), *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- [Form CCC 943](#), *75 percent of Average Gross Income from Farming, Ranching, or Forestry Certification* (if applicable).
- [AD-1026](#), *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*.
- [SF-3881](#), *Direct Deposit*.

Except for the new CCC-943, most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, likely have these forms on file. However, those who are uncertain and want to confirm the status of their forms or need to submit the new CCC-943, can contact their [local FSA county office](#).

If a producer does not receive a pre-filled ECAP application, and they planted or were prevented from planting ECAP eligible commodities in 2024, they should contact their [local FSA office](#).

ECAP Payments and Calculator

ECAP payments will be issued as applications are approved. Initial ECAP payments will be factored by 85% to ensure that total program payments do not exceed available funding. If additional funds remain, FSA may issue a second payment.

ECAP assistance will be calculated using a flat payment rate for the eligible commodity multiplied by the eligible reported acres. Payments are based on acreage and not production. For acres reported as prevented plant, ECAP assistance will be calculated at 50%.

For ECAP payment estimates, producers are encouraged to visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap to use the ECAP online calculator.

Seed and Vendor Finder Tool for CRP Participants and Native Seed Vendors



USDA has worked with the [Conservation Biology Institute \(CBI\)](#) to design and build a free online easy-to-use [Seed and Vendor finder](#) tool to support the producers enrolling in the CRP program, along with other conservation efforts involving native plantings. CBI also partnered with the [Institute for Applied Ecology \(IAE\)](#) to address the needs of the [Native Seed Network](#) and significantly expanded the native seed customer and vendor base.

The seed and vendor finder can be found here: [Seed and Vendor Finder](#)

Currently, CBI has seeded the tool with 214 vendors found through an online search from across the country with limited profiles, and 42 have voluntarily completed full profiles which includes their plant inventory. The tool is designed for easy uploading of their profile and inventory. It also provides an opportunity for vendors without a website to have an online presence and be found by customers looking for seeds. Also check out the plant finder tool where you can find suitable plants, including pollinator friendly plants for your area and soil type. Currently we have 20+ unique visitors to the tool every day and that number is growing!

All vendors are encouraged to add their profile and inventory to the tool. You can do this easily by filling out this simple form located here: <https://crptool.org/contact/>. **A member of the CBI team will send you an invite within 24 h to create your full profile.**

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate

loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your local county USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

USDA Designates Eighteen Maryland Counties as Primary Natural Disaster Areas for Drought; Additional Contiguous Disaster Counties also located in Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

This Secretarial natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency

credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through [emergency loans](#). Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation, or to refinance certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.

According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), these counties suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season of 1) D2 Drought-Severe for eight or more consecutive weeks or 2) D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional.

Disaster #1:

Impacted Area: Maryland

Triggering Disaster: Drought

Application Deadline: November 25, 2025

Primary Counties Eligible: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester in Maryland.

Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:

Maryland: Carroll, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Washington, Baltimore

Delaware: Kent, New Castle, Sussex

D.C.: District of Columbia

Pennsylvania: Bedford, Chester, Fayette, Fulton, Lancaster, Somerset, York

Virginia: Accomack, Fairfax, King George, Prince William, Stafford, Westmoreland, Alexandria

West Virginia: Grant, Hampshire, Mineral, Morgan, Preston

Disaster #2:

Impacted Area: Maryland

Triggering Disaster: Drought

Application Deadline: November 25, 2025

Primary Counties Eligible: Accomack, Caroline, Essex, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland Counties in Virginia.

Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:

Maryland: Charles, St. Mary's, Somerset, Worcester

Virginia: Gloucester, Hanover, James City, Mathews, New Kent, Northampton, Spotsylvania, Stafford

Disaster #3:

Impacted Area: Maryland

Triggering Disaster: Drought

Application Deadline: December 2, 2025

Primary Counties Eligible: Carroll County

Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:

Maryland: Baltimore, Frederick, Howard

Pennsylvania: Adams and York

More Resources

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

The Importance of Responding to NASS Surveys

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture.

If you receive a survey questionnaire, please respond quickly and online if possible.

The results of the surveys help determine the structure of USDA farm programs, such as soil rental rates for the Conservation Reserve Program and prices and yields used for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. This county-level data is critical for USDA farm payment determinations. Survey responses also help associations, businesses and policymakers advocate for their industry and help educate others on the importance of agriculture.

NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

NASS data is available online at nass.usda.gov/Publications and through the searchable [Quick Stats database](#). Watch a video on how NASS data is used at youtube.com/watch?v=m-4zjnh26io&feature=youtu.be.

High Tunnels Provide More Locally Grown Fresh Fruits, Veggies

It's hard to beat produce grown in the Maryland. It's often fresher and tastier, uses less energy for transport, and helps farmers in your community. But the off-season presents a big challenge for farmers who grow fruits and vegetables and for consumers who want to find local produce throughout the year.

When farmers can lengthen the growing season, even by several weeks, their options change. That's why the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service promotes seasonal high tunnel as such a powerful tool. High tunnels are plastic-wrapped, metal-framed structures that are fairly easy and inexpensive to build. They are designed to extend the growing season into the colder months, helping to increase the availability of local produce, keep plants at a steady temperature and even conserve water and energy.

High tunnels are similar to greenhouses, except they are considered "passively heated." That means they do not require electricity to heat – only sunlight. The plastic on the frame actually provides enough insulation to add up to 12 extra weeks to the growing season, depending on location. The inside of a high tunnel boasts its own microclimate, often producing crops of higher quality and quantity than those in traditional farm fields. High tunnels are also different than greenhouses in that the plants are actually in the ground, not in pots or on tables. You can think of it as a plastic covering over a field.

High tunnels can cut costs for the producer by conserving water and requiring fewer inputs, like fertilizers or pesticides. In high tunnels, these inputs are often applied through tubes that run along the base of the plants, allowing water and fertilizer to be delivered directly above the soil. Outside of high tunnels, these inputs are often dispersed on a larger scale and require more to ensure the plants receive an adequate amount.

NRCS helps farmers build high tunnels, providing technical expertise and funding. Local and regional markets often provide farmers with a higher share of the food dollar, and money spent at a local business often continues to circulate within community, creating a multiplier effect and providing greater economic benefits to the area.

For more information, contact your local NRCS office or visit nrcs.usda.gov. You can also watch this [NRCS video on high tunnels](#).

Lending Rates for April

Click [here](#) for April's Lending Rates for Agriculture Producers

Dates to Remember

April 15th - August 15th: Primary Nesting Season for CRP. To stay in compliance with your CRP contract, if you need to spot mow or spot spray invasive or noxious weeds in CRP cover, please contact your local FSA Office to make a request prior to the action.

May 15, 2025: Acreage Reporting Deadline: green peas and potatoes

May 26, 2025: Offices Closed (Memorial Day)

June 15, 2025: Acreage Reporting Deadline for tomatoes

July 15, 2025: Acreage Reporting Deadline for beans (limas only), cucumbers (Planted 4/20-6/25 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties), perennial forage, CRP, and all other crops.

July 31, 2025: Acreage Reporting Deadline for Hemp

August 15, 2025: Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) Deadline

August 15, 2025: Acreage reporting deadline for beans (all types except limas), cucumbers (planted 6/26-8/10 in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties).

Maryland FSA

339 Busch's Frontage Rd.
Suite 104
Annapolis, MD 21409-5561

Phone: (443)-482-2760
Fax: (855)-401-6638

FSA State Executive Director, Acting

Russ Clanton

Russ.Clanton@usda.gov

Farm Programs Chief

Robert Wevodau

robert.wevodau@usda.gov

NRCS State Conservationist

Suzy Daubert

suzy.daubert@usda.gov

Farm Loan Chief

Joseph Scott

joseph.scott@usda.gov