



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Alabama USDA October Updates - October 21, 2021

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Alabama NRCS Announces Environmental Quality Incentive Program Sign Up

Agricultural producers and forest landowners can now submit applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). USDA applications must be submitted by November 12, 2021 to be considered during the first application batching period of fiscal year 2022.

EQIP offers agricultural producers financial and technical assistance to producers and is administered by NRCS. EQIP offers conservation practices to help producers make

improvements, including enhancing water and air quality, conserving ground and surface water, reducing soil erosion and sedimentation or enhancing wildlife habitat.

EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis. However, to be considered for funding during the first batching period in Fiscal Year 2022, applicants must apply by November 12, 2021. Applications submitted by the funding cycle deadline will be evaluated to be considered for funding in that funding cycle. Applications received after that date will be accepted and evaluated for future funding.

If a producer's application is funded, NRCS will offer an EQIP contract for financial assistance to help address the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payment rates for conservation practices are reviewed and set each fiscal year.

To apply, contact your [NRCS field office](#) for an appointment.

USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs

Contact Farm Service Agency for Feed Transportation & Water Hauling Assistance

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new [ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool](#) is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
- Number of truckloads you normally haul.
- Normal mileage per truckload.
- Share of normal feed cost

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a [tutorial video](#) is available.

Updates to ELAP

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-

raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#); or Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.

Payment Calculations

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of \$6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.

More Drought Recovery Information

USDA has taken additional steps to assist drought-impacted producers, including:

- [Extending deadlines for crop insurance premium and administrative fees, and deferring interest accrual.](#)
- [Streamlining and accelerating losses and issuance of indemnity payments for crop insurance.](#)
- [Investing \\$41.8 million through a four-state pilot of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts focused on drought practices.](#)
- [Investing \\$15 million through a block grant to the Klamath Drought Response Agency to provide payments to producers to reduce irrigation demand.](#)

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For details, producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

Conservation at Work Video Series

A new video series from NRCS and farmers.gov, *Conservation at Work*, presents short and easy to understand videos about popular conservation practices. These videos feature producers explaining how an individual practice helps their land and why they are using it.

The videos shine the spotlight on farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners from across the U.S. who explain why they've implemented the conservation practices and how they work on their land. They also provide insight into how each practice is helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money.

The first 15 videos cover:

- Brush Management
- Cover Crop
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Grade Stabilization
- Grassed Waterway
- High Tunnel
- No Till
- Nutrient Management
- Prescribed Grazing
- Pumping Station
- Sprinkler System
- Trails and Walkways
- Waste Storage
- Water & Sediment Control Basin
- Wetland Restoration

The *Conservation at Work* video series can be found at farmers.gov/conserv/conservationatwork.

USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option

If you're a historically underserved producer and participating in the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), you can receive an advance conservation practice payment before you implement a practice.

A [historically underserved producer](#) is described as one of the below:

- **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** – is new to farming or ranching, or, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years.
- **Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** – is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of that group without regard to their individual qualities.
- **Veteran Farmer or Rancher** – has served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm or ranch, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years, or first obtained veteran status during the last 10 years.
- **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher** – has a household income at or below the national poverty level. Eligibility can be determined by using [this online tool](#).

Under the advance payment option, such producers may request payments when they have final designs and job sheets and are ready to begin their EQIP practices. Advance payments provide at least 50 percent of the payment rate for each practice. The funds must be spent within 90 days of receipt and practices must be completed as agreed to in an EQIP plan of operations. Producers also may opt to have NRCS pay the contractors or vendors directly.

For more information, visit the [advance payments](#) webpage where you can download the [EQIP Advance Payment Fact Sheet](#).

USDA Unveils New Climate Partnership Initiative, Requests Public Input

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to partnering with agriculture, forestry and rural communities to develop climate solutions that strengthen rural America. The Department has outlined and requested public comments on a new climate partnership initiative designed to create new revenue streams for producers via market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices.

Guided by science, USDA will support a set of pilot projects that provide incentives to implement climate-smart conservation practices on working lands and to quantify and monitor the carbon and greenhouse gas benefits associated with those practices. The Department published a Request for Information (RFI) seeking public comment and input on design of the new initiative. Stakeholders interested in providing comments may do so on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on November 1, 2021, via the [Federal Register, Docket ID: USDA-2021-0010](#).

For more information, visit <https://www.usda.gov/topics/climate-solutions>

Alabama NRCS Announces Classic Conservation Stewardship Program Signup

Agricultural producers and forest landowners looking to build on conservation efforts while strengthening their operation can now apply for technical and financial assistance through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). USDA will accept applications, which must be submitted by November 12, 2021 to be considered for the first application batching period of fiscal year 2022 funding.

NRCS offers CSP in all 50 states and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous signups. The program provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to adverse weather. CSP is for working lands, including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land and agricultural land under Indian tribe jurisdiction.

NRCS Alabama makes funding selections at specific times during the fiscal year. Additionally, existing CSP participants may have an opportunity to renew their contracts in the first half of the fifth year of their five-year contract.

NRCS accepts applications for CSP at any time throughout the year. NRCS sets specific deadlines for ranking and funding opportunities.

To apply, contact your [NRCS field office](#) for an appointment.

Application Period Opens for Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a [Request for Applications](#) (RFA) for the new Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant program and encourages eligible entities to apply now for funds. Applications must be submitted electronically through the grant portal at <https://usda-prs.grantsolutions.gov/usda> by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, November 22, 2021. Approximately \$650 million in funding is available for the PRS grants, which are funded by the Pandemic Assistance provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

The PRS Grant program will assist small businesses in certain commodity areas, including specialty crop producers, shellfish farming, finfish farming, aquaculture, and apiculture; specialty crop, meat, and other processors; distributors; and farmers markets. Small businesses and nonprofits in these industries can apply for a grant to cover COVID-related expenses such as workplace safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment (PPE), retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety, shifting to online sales platforms, transportation, worker housing, and medical costs. The minimum funding request is \$1,500 and the maximum funding request is \$20,000.

The [RFA](#) and the [PRS Grant Portal](#) provide more details about eligibility for the grant. Eligible entities are required to obtain a free DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) BEFORE applying for this program. USDA has created a custom PRS DUNS number portal at <https://support.dnb.com/PandemicResponse>.

Application resources including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), tip sheets in English and Spanish on applying for a DUNS Number, videos on “How to Apply” and more are available on the [PRS Grant Portal](#).

For more information, you can also reach out to the PRS help desk, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. ET at (301) 238-5550 or usda.ams.prs@grantsolutions.gov.

Check your eligibility, obtain a DUNS number, and learn more about the application process at the [PRS Grant Portal](#).

Alabama NRCS Announces Sign Up for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

Agricultural producers and forest landowners can now submit applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Applications must be submitted by November 12, 2021 to be considered during the first batching period of fiscal year 2022.

ACEP helps restore, protect and enhance wetlands on eligible land through its Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) component. Through the Agricultural Land Easement component (ALE), it also protects the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land. ALE also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible land. ACEP is administered by NRCS.

ACEP enrollment options include:

- **ACEP-WRE:** Wetland reserve easements that are perpetual, 30-years or maximum duration under state law, or 30-year contracts on acreage owned by Indian Tribes.
- **ACEP-ALE:** Agricultural Land Easements that are perpetual or maximum duration allowed under State law.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. However, to be considered during the first batching period in Fiscal Year 2022, entities and landowners must apply by November 12, 2021. Application packets submitted to NRCS Alabama field offices will be forwarded to the NRCS Alabama State Office for review and ranking.

To apply, contact your [NRCS field office](#) for an appointment.

Higher Loan Limit Now Available for USDA Guaranteed Farm Loans

USDA Extends Disaster Set-Aside for Direct Loans Until 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a higher loan limit will be available for borrowers seeking a guaranteed farm loan starting Oct. 1, 2021, from \$1.776 million to \$1.825 million.

FSA farm loans offer access to funding for a wide range of producer needs, from securing land to financing the purchase of equipment. Guaranteed loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

In fiscal year 2021, FSA saw continued strong demand for guaranteed loans. FSA obligated more than \$3.4 billion in guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans. This includes nearly \$1.2 billion for beginning farmers. The number of guaranteed borrowers has grown by 10% to more than 38,750 farmers and ranchers over the last decade. FSA expects the increasing demand for farm loans to continue into fiscal year 2022.

Disaster Set-Aside Extension

USDA has additional support available to producers given the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 Delta variant and has extended the availability of COVID-19 Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) for installments due through Jan. 31, 2022. In addition, FSA will permit a second DSA for COVID-19 and a second DSA for natural disasters for those who had an initial COVID-19 DSA. Requests for a COVID-19 DSA or a second DSA must be received no later than May 1, 2022.

Last year, FSA broadened the use of the DSA. Normally used in the wake of natural disasters, the DSA can now allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19 and determined to be eligible, to have their next payment set aside. The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This will improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

More Information

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#). Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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.

USDA Invests \$4.7 Million to Provide Outreach and Technical Assistance to Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced an investment of \$4.7 million to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers. The partnerships will support participation in Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, including those that are part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative.

Fifty-six project proposals, covering all states and territories, are being finalized to assist historically underserved farmers and ranchers in accessing FSA programs. Programs include outreach for pandemic assistance programs, including the signup re-opening of the [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#) (CFAP 2). These proposals will also assist in outreach for FSA's farm programs, [conservation programs](#), [farm loans](#), [county committee elections](#), [disaster programs](#), the [Heirs' Property Relending Program](#), heirs' property succession planning and the Agricultural Marketing Service's [Pandemic Response and Safety Grant](#) program.

Read about the 56 funded projects and organizations on [FSA's cooperative agreements webpage](#).

Is the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program Right for You?

Farmers and ranchers rely on crop insurance to protect themselves from disasters and unforeseen events, but not all crops are insurable through the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides producers another option to obtain coverage against disaster for these crops. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insured crops impacted by natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevents crop planting.

Commercially produced crops and agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available are generally eligible for NAP. Eligible crops include those grown specifically for food, fiber, livestock consumption, biofuel or biobased products, or be commodities such as value loss crops like Christmas trees and ornamental nursery, honey, maple sap, and many others. Contact your FSA office to see which crops are eligible in your state and county.

Eligible causes of loss include drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, earthquake, flood. These events must occur during the NAP policy coverage period, before or during harvest, and the disaster must directly affect the eligible crop. For guidance on causes of loss not listed, contact your local FSA county office.

Interested producers must apply for coverage using FSA form [CCC-471](#), "Application for Coverage," and pay the applicable service fee at the FSA office where their farm records are maintained. These must be filed by the application closing date. Closing dates vary by crop,

so it is important to contact your local FSA office as soon as possible to ensure you don't miss an application closing date.

At the time of application, each producer will be provided a copy of the [NAP Basic Provisions](#), which describes how NAP works and all the requirements you must follow to maintain NAP coverage. NAP participants must provide accurate annual reports of their production in non-loss years to ensure their NAP coverage is beneficial to their individual operation.

Producers are required to pay service fees which vary depending on the number of crops and number of counties your operation is located in. The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Premiums also apply when producers elect higher levels of coverage with a maximum premium of \$15,750 per person or legal entity depending on the maximum payment limitation that may apply to the NAP covered producer. The service fee can be waived for beginning, qualifying veteran, and limited resource farmers and rancher., These farmers and ranchers can also receive a 50 percent reduction in the premium.

For more detailed information on NAP, download the [NAP Fact Sheet](#). To get started with NAP, we recommend you contact your [local USDA service center](#).



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