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Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally.

All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

“Producers serving on FSA county committees play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the agency, and they serve as the eyes and ears for the producers who elected them,” said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. “In order for county committees to be both effective and equitable in their decision-making at the local level, they must reflect the full diversity of American agriculture. I am excited that we have another opportunity through this year’s nominations and elections cycle to make our committees more inclusive, and in turn, better equipped to best serve all our customers. I encourage you to consider serving the farmers, ranchers and producers in your community on your local FSA county committee, and I thank you in advance for your public service.”

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and they may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

“Based on feedback from stakeholders, including the USDA Equity Commission, we are unveiling this new tool to make it easier for producers to effectively participate in the process,” Ducheneaux added.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

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. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county’s election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form.

These forms and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023.

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their [local USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and view other farm records data and customer information by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

Urban County Committee Election Results

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the **Los Angeles Metropolitan Area** and the **San Francisco Bay Metropolitan Area** held its first Urban County Committee Election this year.

The urban county committee election results for Los Angeles: **Sam Kang** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-1. **Michael Wood** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-2. **Kelly Ann Alesi** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-3.

The urban county committee election results for San Francisco Bay Metropolitan Area: **Jerome Draper** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-1. **Jennifer Sowerwine** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-2. **Tedd Fang** was elected to represent Local Administrative Area #3-3.

Every FSA office is served by a county committee made up of local farmers, ranchers and foresters who are elected by local producers.

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Urban county committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs and serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

USDA Extends Application Deadline for Revenue Loss Programs to July 14

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is extending the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) to **July 14, 2023**, to give producers more time to apply for assistance. The original deadline was June 2.

Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to agricultural producers and provide assistance in completing an ERP Phase Two application. The extended deadline will give producers more time to work with these partner organizations and apply for assistance.

“Farm Service Agency recognizes that there is a learning curve for producers applying for our new revenue-based programs and we want to make sure producers have the time they need to apply for assistance,” said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. “Partnering with these organizations through cooperative agreements provides additional educational and technical assistance to producers who may need help with the Emergency Relief Program Phase Two application process. The deadline extension gives producers more time to locate and work with these organizations to complete their program application.”

Cooperative Agreements for ERP Phase Two Application Assistance

Through cooperative agreements with FSA, the following organizations are providing free assistance to producers across the United States and territories.

- [Alabama State Association of Cooperatives](#)
- [Farmers Legal Action Group, INC.](#)
- [Flower Hill Institute](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council, Inc.](#)
- [North South Institute](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside II](#)
- [Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA](#)
- [Rural Coalition](#)
- [Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO](#)

Depending on a producer’s location, these nine partners can provide assistance either by phone or through online meeting software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

There is never a charge for technical assistance provided by FSA employees or cooperative agreement recipients. These organizations will assist producers with completing the application and any follow-up future insurance coverage requirements. Producers who receive ERP payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years. These organizations will not collect producer records, complete or sign the application form, or act on the producer’s behalf in any way throughout this process.

Find more information on FSA cooperative agreements and contact information for the nine organizations please visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index.

PARP Application Assistance

USDA will host a webinar that focus on completing the PARP application form on June 8, 2023 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. eastern with members of the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee. Register [here](#).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ERP Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Assistance will be primarily to producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or NAP, since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One.

To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a 15% or greater decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a baseline year.

FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that can help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue for each respective program.

Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two and PARP assistance. Producers should also keep in mind that July 15 is a major deadline to complete acreage reports for most crops. FSA encourages producers to complete the ERP Phase Two application, PARP application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

More Information

For more information, view the [ERP Phase Two Fact Sheet](#), [PARP Fact Sheet](#), the [ERP Phase Two-PARP Comparison Fact Sheet](#), [ERP Phase Two application video tutorial](#), [PARP application video tutorial](#), [myth-buster blog](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Extends Deadline for Emergency Conservation Program Applications from California Producers in 52 Counties

Funding Available to Help Restore Lands to Pre-Disaster Condition, Replace or Repair Fencing

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended the deadline for accepting [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) applications from California agricultural producers who need assistance to address damages from severe storms. The application deadline has been extended an additional six months to October 13, 2023.

“We understand the extent of the damage caused by these severe storms and the catastrophic and widespread impacts of these disasters on California’s agricultural communities,” said Blong Xiong, State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in California. “This deadline extension will give producers more time to apply for emergency assistance and rebuild with resiliency.”

ECP provides financial assistance to producers to help them restore their farmland to pre-disaster conditions. Approved ECP applicants may receive up to 75% of the cost of an approved restoration activity. Limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and beginning

farmers and ranchers may receive up to 90% cost-share. The payment limitation for ECP is \$500,000 per disaster event.

The approved counties for ECP signup are Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Ventura, Yolo and Yuba.

The approved ECP practices under this authorization for recovery include:

- Removing debris from farmland;
- Grading, shaping, releveling, or similar measures;
- Replacing or repairing permanent fences; and
- Restoring conservation structures and other installations

Producers with damage from such events must apply for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. They must also work with FSA to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review process. before they begin reconstructive work. If a producer submits an ECP application after reconstructive work has been completed, their eligibility for program benefits may be adversely impacted.

FSA county committees will evaluate applications based on an applicant's estimate or measurement of the damaged land, taking into consideration the type and extent of the damage. On-site visits will be required for every ECP application. Applying for ECP assistance does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be provided.

The use of ECP funds is limited to activities to return the land to the relative pre-disaster condition. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.

More Information

For more information on ECP, please contact your local FSA office or visit farmers.gov/recover. To find your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Additional USDA disaster assistance can be found on farmers.gov, including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance](#) fact sheet, and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine program or loan options. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

How to Document Flood Losses

If you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to recent floods, you may be eligible for disaster assistance programs through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) offers payments to you for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs.

To participate in LIP, you will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event, and you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. To participate in ELAP, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock losses due to the eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses;
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type and weight - important to document prior to disposal;
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts;
- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition;
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition;
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal;
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed;

For more information, contact your local FSA Office.

USDA Offers Assistance to Help Organic Dairy Producers Cover Increased Costs with the new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP)

ODMAP signup began May 24th and runs through July 27, 2023

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), announces assistance for dairy producers with the new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP). ODMAP is established to help 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, under the ODMAP, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is making \$104 million available to organic dairy operations to assist with projected marketing costs in 2023, calculated using their marketing costs in 2022.

FSA will begin accepting applications for ODMAP on May 24, 2023. Eligible producers include certified organic dairy operations that produce milk from cows, goats and sheep.

How ODMAP Works

FSA is providing financial assistance for a producer's projected marketing costs in 2023 based on their 2022 costs. ODMAP provides a one-time cost-share payment based on marketing costs on pounds of organic milk marketed in the 2022 calendar year.

ODMAP provides financial assistance that will immediately support certified organic dairy operations during 2023 keeping organic dairy operations sustainable until markets return to more normal conditions.

How to Apply

FSA is accepting applications from May 24 to July 27, 2023. To apply, producers should contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#). To complete the ODMAP application, producers must certify to pounds of 2022 milk production, how 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 2023 and 2022 along with the certification of 2022 milk production in hundredweight.

ODMAP complements other assistance available to dairy producers, including Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and Supplemental DMC, with more than \$300 million in benefits paid for the 2023 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](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

**Don't Miss Your Opportunity to be Represented
in Ag Census Data**

Time is running out to respond to the 2022 Census of Agriculture! Thank you to the producers who have already completed the ag census. If you have not responded, there is still time. **By federal law, the ag census questionnaire needs to be completed by everyone who received it, including landowners who lease land to producers, those involved in conservation programs, even those who may have received the ag census and did not farm in 2022.**

Strong response means strong data; these data will inform decisions that will help shape the future of American agriculture for the next five or six years. By not responding, you risk being unrepresented and therefore underserved in farm programs and funding, crop insurance rates, rural development, disaster assistance, and more. Return your ag census by mail or fill it out online at agcounts.usda.gov. Learn more at nass.usda.gov/AqCensus and respond today. Learn more at nass.usda.gov/AqCensus and respond today.

Community Alliance with Family Farmers Offers Small Farm Tech Hub



How can technology help expand market opportunities and increase business efficiencies for small farms?

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) Tech Hub is here to Help!

Free Consultation services available to small scale farmers, food hubs and farmers markets operating out of California.

Request an appointment at www.caff.org/techsupport

For any questions email Techhub@caff.org or visit www.caff.org/techhub

A Q&A on Choosing a Tax Professional

If you participate in USDA programs, it's time to start preparing to file your taxes. In this Ask the Expert, Dr. Tamara Cushing answers questions about choosing a tax professional. Dr. Cushing is an Extension Forest Business Specialist from the University of Florida who works to educate landowners, foresters and tax professionals about the economics of growing trees, tax interactions with forestry and landowner succession.

What Qualifies Someone to Complete Your Tax Return?

- Here are some qualifications to look for: A degree in accounting and possibly in taxation; maybe a law degree.
- Certification by a state licensing body or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This may include CPA, Licensed Tax Consultant (LTC), Licensed Tax Preparer (LTP), Enrolled Agent (EA), and tax attorney. Also, some Certified Financial Planners

(CFP) can provide tax services. Some states require paid preparers to have specific qualifications to complete state tax returns and some don't. Qualified, licensed and or certified tax preparers may be found through various locations some of which will be discussed later in this Q&A.

- Some preparers may not hold educational or other professional credentials but are IRS-authorized. These preparers will have a PTIN (Preparer tax identification number) and complete continuing education courses required by the IRS and or state regulatory agency.
- All preparers should have a PTIN.

To read the full blog visit <https://www.farmers.gov/blog/ask-the-expert-qa-on-choosing-tax-professional-with-tamara-cushing>.

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.

Free Farm Manager Apprenticeship Training

Farmers, are you searching for your future manager or supervisor? Whether you have a current employee who could use some additional training, or are seeking to hire a new team member, The Beginning Farm and Ranch Management Apprenticeship provides a structured pathway for aspiring farm managers to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful on your farm. The Center for Land-Based Learning covers all tuition for coursework and provides support for farmers and apprentices. To learn more about training an apprentice, visit <https://landbasedlearning.org/apprentice-farmer-mentor>

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