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## **USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Farmers and Livestock Producers in California Impacted by Floods**

California agricultural operations have been significantly impacted by the recent floods throughout the state. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover. Impacted producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#) to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages.

“USDA stands ready to assist in the recovery from catastrophic flooding by helping farmers, livestock producers, landowners, and communities clean up and restore farmland, forests and watersheds,” said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm

Production and Conservation (FPAC). “USDA employees are working diligently to deliver FPAC’s extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services.”

Flood impacts are expected to last for months in some counties as additional precipitation is expected in the upcoming weeks. Producers should keep in contact with their local USDA service center as they assess the impacts to their operations.

### **USDA Disaster Assistance**

Producers who experience livestock deaths may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). To participate in LIP, producers must provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA county office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Payments will be issued once the losses exceed normal mortality.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) compensates eligible producers for hive loss, stored feed and grazing losses. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines lost. This complements [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days.

“It’s important to stay informed about the various programs available to assist in the recovery efforts from these severe weather events and it is equally important that you contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop, livestock, and farm infrastructure damages and losses,” said Blong Xiong, State Executive Director for FSA in California. “Required documentation such as farm records, herd inventory, receipts, and pictures of damage or loss will help expedite FSA disaster assistance.”

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers who cannot secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.

### **Risk Management**

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA’s [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss](#)

[\(CCC-576\)](#) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

“Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are offered to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future,” said Jeff Yasui, Director of RMA’s Regional Office that covers California. “The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters, and agents are experienced and well trained in handling these types of events.”

Producers who have not applied for NAP coverage may still be covered. FSA has [updated NAP](#) to remove barriers and establish procedures through which an underserved producer with a CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, on file prior to the applicable NAP application closing date will automatically receive basic coverage for any NAP-eligible crops. Like all NAP-covered producers, underserved producers will still need to file a notice of loss and apply for program benefits.

### **Conservation**

FSA’s [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, remove debris, replace damaged irrigation system, land leveling. FSA has updated ECP policy to permit advance payments, up to 25% of costs, for all ECP practices. FSA is now accepting ECP applications.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the [Emergency Watershed Protection](#) (EWP) program, which assists local government sponsors with the cost of addressing watershed impairments or hazards such as debris removal and streambank stabilization. The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters. All projects must have an eligible project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75% of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90% within county-wide limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

EWP is designed for installation of recovery measures to safeguard life and property as a result of a natural disaster. Threats that the EWP Program addresses are termed watershed impairments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged waterways.
- Unstable streambanks.
- Severe erosion jeopardizing public infrastructure.
- Wind-borne debris removal.

Eligible sponsors include cities, counties, towns or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organizations. Sponsors must be able to provide the local construction share, obtain permits and site access and agree to perform operations and maintenance of the constructed projects. Willing sponsors must submit a formal assistance request (by mail or email) to the state conservationist within 60 days of the

natural disaster occurrence or 60 days from the date when access to the sites become available. For more information, potential sponsors should [contact their local NRCS office](#).

“EWP provides immediate assistance to communities to mitigate potential hazards to life and property resulting from disasters and particularly the severe erosion and flooding that can occur,” said Carlos Suarez, State Conservationist for the NRCS in California. “EWP allows us to work with local sponsors to help damaged watersheds so that lives and property are protected while preventing further devastation in the community.”

Reclamation District 800 in Sacramento has already received \$1.5M in EWP funds to assist with levee repairs after weeks of rain caused breaches and breaks.

### **More Information**

On [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov), 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 Issues Additional Pandemic Assistance Payments for Underserved Producers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is currently making automatic Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) top-up payments to underserved farmers and ranchers. Payments will be based on the 2020 program certification on form CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification.

Producers who have not previously certified to their status for the 2020 program year have until Feb. 10, 2023, to submit form CCC-860 to be eligible for the additional payments. Contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) for more information.

## **USDA Announces Additional Assistance for Distressed Farmers Facing Financial Risk**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that beginning in April it will provide approximately \$123 million in additional, automatic financial assistance for qualifying farm loan program borrowers who are facing financial risk, as part of the \$3.1 billion to help distressed farm loan borrowers that was provided through Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The announcement builds on financial assistance offered to borrowers through the same program in October 2022.

The IRA directed USDA to expedite assistance to distressed borrowers of direct or guaranteed loans administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) whose operations face financial risk. For example, in the October payments, farmers that were 60 days delinquent due to challenges like natural disasters, the pandemic or other unexpected situations were brought current and had their next installment paid to give them breathing room.

"In too many cases, the rules surrounding our farm loan programs may actually be detrimental to helping a borrower get back to a financially viable path. As a result, some are pushed out of farming and others stuck under a debt burden that prevents them from

growing or reacting to opportunities,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Loan programs for the newest and more vulnerable producers must be about providing opportunity and tailored to expect and manage stumbles and hurdles along the way. Through this assistance, USDA is focusing on generating long-term stability and success for distressed borrowers.”

In October 2022, [USDA provided approximately \\$800 million](#) in initial IRA assistance to more than 11,000 delinquent direct and guaranteed borrowers and approximately 2,100 borrowers who had their farms liquidated and still had remaining debt. USDA shared that it would conduct case-by-case reviews of about 1,600 complex cases for potential initial relief payments, including cases of borrowers in foreclosure or bankruptcy. These case-by-case reviews are underway.

At the same time in October 2022, USDA announced that it anticipated payments using separate pandemic relief funding totaling roughly \$66 million on over 7,000 direct loans to borrowers who used the USDA Farm Service Agency’s **disaster-set-aside** option during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of these payments have been processed and USDA anticipates it will complete all such payments in April 2023.

### **New Assistance for Distressed Borrowers**

FSA intends to provide the new round of relief starting in April to additional distressed borrowers. This will include approximately \$123 million in automatic financial assistance for qualifying Farm Loan Program (FLP) direct loan borrowers who meet certain criteria. Similar to the automatic payments announced in October 2022, qualifying borrowers will receive an individual letter detailing the assistance as payments are made. Distressed borrowers’ eligibility for these new categories of automatic payments will be determined based on their circumstances as of today. More information about the new categories that make up the \$123 million in assistance announced today and the specific amount of assistance a distressed borrower receives can be found described in this fact sheet, [IRA Section 22006: Additional Automatic Payments, Improved Procedures, and Policy Recommendations](#).

To continue to make sure producers are aware of relief potentially available to them, all producers with open FLP loans will receive a letter detailing a new opportunity to receive assistance if they took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their FLP loans, such as taking on more debt, selling property or cashing out retirement accounts. The letter will provide details on eligibility, the specific types of actions that may qualify for assistance, and the process for applying for and providing the documentation to seek that assistance.

These steps are part of a process USDA announced along with the October payments that is focused on assisting borrowers unable to make their next scheduled installment. Earlier this year, all borrowers should have received a letter detailing the process for seeking this type of assistance even before they become delinquent. Borrowers who are within two months of their next installment may seek a cashflow analysis from FSA using a recent balance sheet and operating plan to determine their eligibility.

### **Tax Resources**

USDA will continue to work with the Department of Treasury to help borrowers understand the potential tax implications from the receipt of an IRA payment, including that options may be available to potentially avoid or alleviate any tax burden incurred as a result of receiving this financial assistance.

In early April, USDA will send a specific set of revised tax documents, educational materials and resources to borrowers that received assistance in 2022, including a link to a webinar hosted by a group of farm tax experts to provide education on the options available. USDA cannot provide tax advice and encourages borrowers to consult their own tax professional, but FSA is providing educational materials for borrowers to be aware of the options. USDA has tax-related resources available at [farmers.gov/taxes](https://farmers.gov/taxes).

### **Improved Procedures and Policy Recommendations**

FSA is finalizing changes to its policy handbooks to remove unnecessary hurdles, improve loan making and loan servicing and provide more flexibility on how loans are structured to maximize the opportunities for borrowers. Additional details on those changes can be found in the linked fact sheet and are the start of a broader set of process enhancements. The fact sheet also provides information on the eight, no-cost legislative proposals included in the Fiscal Year 2024 President's Budget that are designed to improve the borrower experience.

## **USDA Announces Additional Assistance for Dairy Farmers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the details of additional assistance for dairy producers, including a second round of payments through the Pandemic Market Volatility Assistance Program (PMVAP) and a new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP). The update to PMVAP and the new ODMAP will enable USDA to better support small- and medium-sized dairy operations who weathered the pandemic and now face other challenges.

“The Biden-Harris administration continues to fulfill its commitments to fill gaps in pandemic assistance for producers. USDA is announcing a second set of payments of nearly \$100 million to close-out the \$350 million commitment under PMVAP through partnerships with dairy handlers and cooperatives to deliver the payments.,” said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt. “USDA is also announcing new assistance targeted to small to medium size organic dairy farmers to help with anticipated marketing costs as they face a variety of challenges from weather to supply-chain challenges.”

### **Pandemic Market Volatility Assistance Program**

PMVAP assists producers who received a lower value due to market abnormalities caused by the pandemic and ensuing Federal policies. As a result of the production cap increase, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will make PMVAP payments to eligible dairy farmers for fluid milk sales between 5 million and 9 million pounds from July through December 2020. This level of production was not eligible for payment under the

first round of the PMVAP. Payment rates will be identical to the first round of payments, 80 percent of the revenue different per month, on fluid milk sales from 5 million to 9 million pounds from July through December 2020. USDA will again distribute monies through agreements with independent handlers and cooperatives, with reimbursement to handlers for allowed administrative costs. USDA will contact handlers with eligible producers to notify them of the opportunity to participate.

As part of the first round, PMVAP paid eligible dairy farmers on up to 5 million pounds of fluid milk sales from July through December 2020. The first round of payments distributed over \$250 million in payments to over 25,000 eligible dairy farmers. These dairy farmers received the full allowable reimbursement on fluid milk sales up to 5 million pounds.

More information about the PMVAP production cap increase is available at [www.ams.usda.gov/pmvap](http://www.ams.usda.gov/pmvap).

### **Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program**

The new ODMAP, to be administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), is intended to help smaller organic dairy farms that have faced a unique set of challenges and higher costs over the past several years that have been compounded by the ongoing pandemic and drought conditions across the country. Many small organic dairy operations are now struggling to stay in business and FSA plans to provide payments to cover a portion of their estimated marketing costs for 2023. Final spending will depend on enrollment and each producers projected production, but ODMAP has been allocated up to \$100 million.

The assistance provided by ODMAP will be provided through unused Commodity Credit Corporation funds remaining from earlier pandemic assistance programs. The assistance will help eligible organic dairy producers with up to 75 percent of their future projected marketing costs in 2023, based on national estimates of marketing costs. This assistance will be provided through a streamlined application process based on a national per hundredweight payment. The payments will be capped at the first five million pounds of anticipated production, in alignment with preexisting dairy programs that target assistance to those smaller dairies that are most vulnerable to marketing challenges. This program is still in development.

Details about the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program will be available and updated at [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) as more details are released in a Notice of Funds Availability later this year.

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## **Farm Service Agency Holds Urban County Committee Elections**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the San Francisco Bay Metropolitan Area and Los Angeles Metropolitan area are holding Urban County Committee Elections that opened March 20, 2023. Nomination forms must be postmarked or received by close of business on April 14, 2023.



**San Francisco Bay Metropolitan Area:** please contact the Sonoma County FSA office at 707-794-1242 ext. 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

**Los Angeles Metropolitan Area:** please contact the Los Angeles County FSA office at 661-942-9549 ext. 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

Urban county committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Like traditional county committee members, urban committee members make important decisions about how FSA programs are administered locally. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who each represent a Local Administrative Area (LAA). Each year, at least one LAA will be up for election.

Nominations are being accepted in the FSA county office through April 14, 2023. Urban producers are encouraged to participate by may nominating themselves or others. Producers can find out if their LAA is up for election or if they are eligible to serve on the urban county committee by contacting their local FSA county office.

FSA will mail election ballots to eligible voters beginning May 5, 2023. Ballots are due back in the local affiliated FSA office no later than June 5, 2023. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail can request one from their local FSA office. Ballots will be counted in the local affiliated FSA office on June 9, 2023, and all newly elected county committee members and alternates will take office July 3, 2023.

## 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](https://www.caff.org/techsupport)

For any questions email [Techhub@caff.org](mailto:Techhub@caff.org) or visit [www.caff.org/techhub](https://www.caff.org/techhub)

## USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program Signup for 2023

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup starting **February 27 through April 7, 2023**. CRP is a cornerstone voluntary conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool in the Biden-Harris administration's effort to address climate change and help

agricultural communities invest in the long-term well-being of their land and natural resources.

“The Conservation Reserve Program is one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the United States, offering a range of conservation options to farmers, ranchers and landowners,” said Blong Xiong, FSA State Executive Director in California. “CRP has and continues to be a great fit for farmers with less productive or marginal cropland, helping them re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and support wildlife habitat. Under this administration, we have made several updates to the program to increase producer interest and enrollment, strengthen the climate benefits of the program and help ensure underserved producers can find a pathway to entry into CRP.”

Producers and landowners enrolled more than 5 million acres into CRP through signups in 2022, building on the acceptance of more than 3.1 million acres in the [largest Grassland CRP signup in history](#). There are currently 23 million acres enrolled in CRP, with 1.9 million set to expire this year. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is aiming to reach the 27-million-acre cap statutorily set for fiscal year 2023.

### **General CRP**

General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

### **Continuous CRP**

Under Continuous CRP, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative (CLEAR30), the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watershed, has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices. Under this administration, FSA also moved SAFE practices back to the Continuous CRP signup, giving producers and landowners more opportunities to participate in the initiative. Through the FWP, producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP as part of their efforts to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, to improve both vegetation and water flow.

This administration has also made significant improvements to CREP, which leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific State, regional or nationally significant conservation concerns. Specifically, USDA made significant improvements to CREP to reduce barriers and make the program more accessible to a broad range of producers and

new types of partners. These updates included flexibility for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance, along with an investment in additional staff to work directly with partners. Through CREP, for the first time ever, three Tribal Nations are now partnering with USDA to help conserve, maintain, and improve grassland productivity, reduce soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat.

### **Grassland CRP**

FSA will announce the dates for Grassland CRP signup in the coming weeks. Grassland CRP is a working lands program, helping landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

### **How to Sign Up**

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

### **More Information**

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

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## **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](https://fsa.usda.gov/microloans).

## USDA Expands Eligibility, Enhances Benefits for Key Disaster Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made updates to several conservation, livestock and crop disaster assistance programs to give more farmers, ranchers, and tribes the opportunity to apply for and access programs that support recovery following natural disasters. Specifically, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded eligibility and enhanced available benefits for a suite of its programs. These updates will provide critical assistance to producers who need to rebuild and recover after suffering catastrophic losses of production and infrastructure due to natural disasters.

FSA has updated the following programs: The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP), the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

### Conservation Disaster Assistance Updates

FSA updated ECP to:

- Allow producers who lease Federally owned or managed lands, including tribal trust land, as well as State land the opportunity to participate.
- Provide advance payments, up to 25% of the cost, for all ECP practices before the restoration is carried out, an option that was previously only available for fence repair or replacement. The cost-share payment must be spent within 60 days.

Additionally, Congress also authorized the Federal government to pay 100% of the ECP and EFRP cost for damage associated with the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire in New Mexico. This fire burned over 340,000 acres from April 2022 to June 2022 and was the largest wildfire in recorded history in New Mexico. ECP and EFRP cost-share assistance is typically capped at 75%. This policy change for 100% cost-share applies only to those locations impacted by the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire.

ECP and EFRP provide financial and technical assistance to restore conservation practices like fencing, damaged farmland or forests.

### Livestock Disaster Assistance Updates

FSA also expanded eligible livestock under ELAP, LFP and LIP. Specifically, horses maintained on eligible grazing land are eligible for ELAP, LFP and LIP. Many family farms and ranches use their forage to raise horses to augment their other agriculture endeavors.

FSA recognizes that animals maintained in a commercial agriculture operation, add value to the operation and could be available for marketing from the farm. FSA regulations have been updated to include these animals as eligible livestock.

Horses and other animals that are used or intended to be used for racing and wagering remain ineligible.

Ostriches are also now eligible for LFP and ELAP. FSA is making this change because ostriches satisfy more than 50% of their net energy requirement through the consumption of growing forage grasses and legumes and are therefore considered “grazing animals”.

This change for ostriches is effective for the 2022 program year for both LFP and ELAP. ELAP requires a notice of loss to be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss is first apparent. Because this deadline may have passed for 2022, FSA is extending the deadline for filing notices of loss through March 31, 2023.

LIP and ELAP reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died as a result of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed and forage. LFP provides benefits for grazing losses due to drought and eligible wildfires on federally managed lands.

### **Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance**

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. Basic NAP coverage is equivalent to the catastrophic level risk protection plan of insurance coverage, which is based on the amount of loss that exceeds 50% of expected production at 55% of the average market price for the crop.

Previously, to be eligible for NAP coverage, a producer had to submit an application (Form CCC-471) for NAP coverage on or before the application closing date. For 2022, if a producer has a *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* (Form CCC-860) on file with FSA, it will serve as an application for basic coverage for all eligible crops having a 2022 application closing date and all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage will be waived for these producers.

FSA will notify all eligible producers who already have the CCC-860 certification form on file of their eligibility for NAP basic coverage for 2022. To potentially receive NAP assistance, producers who suffered losses due to natural disasters in 2022 should file an acreage report as well as a notice of loss with the FSA at their local Service Center.

Producers who are interested in obtaining NAP coverage for 2023 and subsequent years should also contact their local FSA county office for information on eligibility, coverage options and applying for coverage.

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## **Free Farm Manager Apprentice 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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