



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S
URBAN AGRICULTURE
PROGRAMS
AT A GLANCE

February 2023





URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION

Are you farming or gardening in a city or suburb? From community gardens to indoor vertical farms, urban agriculture provides critical access to healthy food for local communities, as well as jobs, climate resilience, increased green spaces, and closer community ties. USDA can provide resources to start, expand, and operate your farm or garden, market what you grow, and help you recover in case of disaster.

You can meet face-to-face with our staff at your local USDA Service Center to discuss your vision, goals, and ways USDA can help. An FSA team member can help you get a farm number, the first step toward receiving USDA assistance. Even if you are farming on just .01 acres, you can get a farm number, regardless of whether your farm/garden generates income. Find your local office at farmers.gov/service-locator.

To learn about our available loans, financial assistance, and free farming guidance or to sign up for our urban agriculture email list, visit farmers.gov/urban. If you're new to farming, you can contact your beginning farmer coordinator at farmers.gov/newfarmers; some States even have urban farmer coordinators. Your local **Extension Office** can also offer local assistance and resources.

What is Urban Ag?

Urban agriculture includes the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban areas. Community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic and aquaponic facilities, and vertical production are all examples of urban agriculture. Tribal communities and small towns may also be included as examples of urban agriculture.

USDA Agencies and Offices with Urban Agriculture Programs

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP)

Risk Management Agency (RMA)

Rural Development (RD)

Forest Service (FS)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is not a USDA agency.

FUNDING

Urban agriculture involves a wide variety of individuals and groups. For the purposes of this document, we used two broadly defined categories—producers and food system partnerships—to help you determine what may be of interest to you. Eligibility often varies between USDA programs. Please visit with individual agencies to determine if you or your group qualifies for a listed program.

Producers – May include farms and gardens run by individuals, community organizations, school groups, non-profits, or other entities depending on the eligibility requirements of the listed program.

Food System Partnerships – May include organizations and collaborative partnerships focused on food system issues, such as local governments, Tribal governments and organizations, school districts, and nonprofits.

Financing Your Farm

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
FARM LOAN PROGRAMS	FSA	Loans	Provide access to capital, either directly from FSA or through a third-party lender. Farm Ownership loans can help you purchase and improve land and Operating Loans can be used for shorter term expenses such as fertilizer, labor, and equipment. Microloans are particularly beneficial for the unique needs of urban farms. Eligibility requires sufficient education, training, experience, or alternative substitutions. Currently, non-profits are NOT eligible for these loans.	❖	
FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOANS	FSA	Loans	Provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and/or transport eligible commodities. Includes cold storage structures and related equipment, refrigerator trucks, and more. These loans are available to anyone growing an eligible commodity, regardless of business structure or whether they can get credit elsewhere. Eligible commodities include fruits, vegetables, flowers, honey, and mushrooms.	❖	
URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION GRANTS	NRCS	Grants	Initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and others in urban areas. Funds projects that improve local food access, support farmer infrastructure, or increase production of urban farms or food forests.	❖	❖
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GUARANTEED LOAN PROGRAM	RD	Loans to intermediary lenders who provide guaranteed loans to individuals	Find guaranteed financing for developing land, buildings, equipment, supplies and infrastructure. Projects may be funded in either rural or urban areas under the Local and Regional Food System Initiative.	❖	

On-Farm Guidance and Innovation

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS	NRCS	Financial Assistance, Free Guidance	Provides technical and financial assistance for conservation practices, including high and low tunnels, soil health management systems, composting, irrigation and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat.	❖	
CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS	NRCS	Grants	Supports development of new approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation.	❖	❖
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION	NIFA	Technical Guidance	The Cooperative Extension System (CES)—a partnership between USDA, local and State governments, and the Nation’s land-grant university system—provides education and outreach to farmers, ranchers, hobbyists, and communities of all sizes.	❖	❖
BEGINNING FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	NIFA	Grants for Technical Assistance	Provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers.	❖	❖
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE RESEARCH AND OUTREACH	ARS	Technical Guidance and Research Assistance	Assists the National Guard and veterans with developing innovative orchard and garden technologies that enable efficient fruit and vegetable production on abandoned mine lands and poor quality soils.	❖	❖
USDA FOREST SERVICE URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM	FS	Technical Guidance, Financial Assistance	The Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Program is a technical, financial, and educational assistance program, delivering nature-based solutions to ensure a resilient and equitable tree canopy where more than 84 percent of Americans live.	❖	❖
OUTREACH AND ASSISTANCE FOR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS AND RANCHERS AND VETERAN FARMERS AND RANCHERS PROGRAM (2501 PROGRAM)	OPPE	Grants to support technical assistance and agricultural outreach	The overall goal of the 2501 Program is to encourage and assist underserved farmers and ranchers, veteran farmers and ranchers, and beginning farmers and ranchers with owning and operating profitable farms and ranches and in participating equitably in the full range of agricultural, forestry, and related programs offered by USDA. Eligible entities may compete for funding on projects that provide education and training in agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, and agriculturally related services; connect farmers, ranchers and foresters to USDA programs, and to conduct outreach initiatives designed to accomplish those goals.	❖	❖

Marketing and Selling Your Farm Products

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
FARMER'S MARKET PROMOTION PROGRAM	AMS	Grants	Funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products.	❖	❖
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM AND SENIORS FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM	FNS	Financial Assistance	Provides coupons to WIC participants for eligible foods from State-approved farmers, farmers' markets, or roadside stands. Contact your State for eligibility and more information on how you can accept WIC as payment when selling products directly to consumers.	❖	❖
VALUE-ADDED PRODUCER GRANT PROGRAM	RD	Grants	Helps fund value-added activities related to processing and marketing new products, which increases marketing opportunities and producer income.	❖	
ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST-SHARE PROGRAM	FSA	Financial Assistance	Reimburses up to 50% of cost of organic certification under the National Organic Program (NOP).	❖	
MARKETING ASSISTANCE LOANS	FSA	Loans	Provides producers of honey, wool, and mohair with financing to enable the delay of selling until market prices are more favorable.	❖	

Protecting Your Farm

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND EMERGENCY LOANS	FSA	Loans and Financial Assistance	FSA offers a suite of programs and loans to help farmers recover from natural disasters or build resilience to future disasters.	❖	
FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE	RMA	Insurance	Manages risk from natural disasters through coverage through crop insurance policies for more than 100 crops. Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm are good options for urban farmers. Insurance is purchased through Approved Insurance Providers (and not USDA).	❖	

Expanding Regional and Local Food Systems and Food Access

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM	NIFA	Grants	Funds community food projects to increase food security and self-reliance of community members over their food needs. Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by bringing sectors within the whole food system together to assess strengths, establish connections, and improve self-reliance of community members over their food needs		❖
URBAN, INDOOR, AND EMERGING AGRICULTURE	NIFA	Grants	Supports research, education, and extension activities to extend development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production, harvesting, transportation, aggregation, packaging, distribution and markets.		❖
FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM	FNS	Grants, training, technical assistance, research	Helps child nutrition program operators incorporate local foods into National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program. Training and guidance for producers seeking to sell to schools. Grants promote local food in program meals, educate children about where their food comes from, and inspire youth toward careers in agriculture.	❖	❖
REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM	AMS	Grants	Supports public-private partnerships that plan and develop local or regional food systems including production, processing, distribution, and eventual consumer consumption.		❖
COMPOSTING AND FOOD WASTE REDUCTION COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS	NRCS	Cooperative Agreements	Supports local and municipal governments, schools, and tribal governments/organizations with projects that develop and test strategies for municipal compost and food waste reduction plans.		❖
GUS SCHUMACHER NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM	NIFA	Grants	Funds projects that increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers.	❖	❖
LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION PROGRAM	AMS	Grants	Funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand local and regional food businesses and engage in producer-to-consumer marketing to increase access to and availability of local and regional agricultural products.		❖
URBAN AND CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES	ARS	Technical Guidance and Research Assistance	Supports research, education, and outreach activities to extend development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production systems, including development of crop plants adapted to urban and controlled environment agriculture, hydroponics and aquaponics, artificial lighting, pest and disease management, postharvest, packaging, food safety and quality, and human nutrition.	❖	❖

Loans for Youth and Legal Land Issues

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCERS	PARTNERS
YOUTH LOANS	FSA	Loans	Funds projects for youth ages 10-20 that are income-producing projects and help them gain experience and education in agriculture.	❖	
HIGHLY FRACTIONATED INDIAN LAND LOANS	FSA	Loans	Help you gain title to inherited land, create a succession plan, or reconsolidate land ownership interest.	❖	
HEIRS PROPERTY RELENDING PROGRAM					

ASSISTANCE FOR FARMS AND GARDENS WHERE URBAN AND RURAL MEET

Some farms are not in big cities or rural areas but are in areas between the two. If that describes your farm, you may be eligible for the programs above as well as the Rural Development programs below.

Rural Development Programs

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
ECONOMIC IMPACT INITIATIVE GRANTS	RD	Grants	Funds development of community facilities—including community gardens, food pantries, food hubs, and greenhouses—in economically distressed communities. Cities, villages, and townships with fewer than 20,000 residents and an unemployment rate greater than 19.5% may apply.
RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE GRANTS	RD	Grants	Funds housing, community facilities (such as urban farms), and business training projects for non-profit housing and community development organizations, low-income rural communities, and federally recognized tribes.
RURAL MICROENTREPRENEUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	RD	Loans	This loan can be used to help start a business with 10 or fewer full-time employees.
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GUARANTEED LOAN PROGRAM	RD	Loans	RD can help producers locate guaranteed financing. Projects may be funded in either rural or urban areas under the Local and Regional Food System Initiative.

(continued)

PROGRAM	AGENCY	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA PROGRAM RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS & ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT GUARANTEED LOANS & GRANTS	RD	Grants	Provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.
VALUE-ADDED PRODUCER GRANT PROGRAM	RD	Grants	Helps you enter into value-added activities related to the processing and marketing of new products. The goals of this program are to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.
RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT	RD	Grants	Supports workforce training and projects that benefit rural areas or towns outside the urbanized periphery of any city with a population of 50,000 or more.

More Information

For more information about USDA assistance for urban farmers and the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, visit farmers.gov/urban and usda.gov/urban.

USDA Service Centers are locations where you can connect with Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or Rural Development employees for assistance. To find yours, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.



This document should not be used to determine eligibility for programs. Requirements can be complex. Please check with each agency to determine if you or your organization are eligible for these programs.

