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## USDA Encourages Producers to Enroll in Grassland CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting next week through May 13, 2022. Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover. The program had its highest enrollment in history in 2021 and is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader effort to equip producers with the tools they need to help address climate change and invest in the long-term health of our natural resources.

[Grassland CRP](#) is a federally funded voluntary working lands program. Through the program, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides annual rental payments to landowners to maintain and conserve grasslands while allowing producers to graze, hay, and produce seed on that land. Maintaining the existing permanent cover provides several benefits, including reducing erosion, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and capturing and maintaining carbon in the soil and cover.

FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. The annual rental rate varies by county with a national minimum rental rate of \$13 per acre for this signup. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

### Grassland CRP National Priority Zones

Because Grassland CRP supports not only grazing operations but also biodiversity and conserving environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion, FSA created two [National Priority Zones](#) in 2021: the Greater Yellowstone Migration Corridor and Dust Bowl Zone. As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's focus on conservation in important wildlife corridors and key seasonal ranges, for this year's signup, FSA is expanding the

Greater Yellowstone Wildlife Migration Corridor Priority Zone to include seven additional counties across Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, to help protect the big-game animal migration corridor associated with Wyoming elk, mule deer, and antelope.

Offers within one of these National Priority Zones will receive an additional 15 ranking points and \$5 per acre if at least 50% of the offer is located in the zone.

Alongside Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can also enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

### **Broadening Reach of Program**

As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans, will receive 10 additional ranking points to enhance their offers.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, non-profit, and private entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

### **More Information on CRP**

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the May 13 deadline. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp).

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The working lands signup announced today demonstrates how much it has evolved from the original program that was primarily intended to control soil erosion and only had the option to take enrolled land out of production. The program has expanded over the years and now supports a greater variety of conservation and wildlife benefits, along with the associated economic benefits.

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## **USDA to Extend Application Deadlines for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is extending the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity after requests from many stakeholders.

The new deadlines to apply via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. ET:

- First Funding Pool – May 6, 2022  
Proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million
- Second Funding Pool – June 10, 2022  
Proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999

The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart production practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits. USDA began accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022 on Feb. 7, 2022, and since then, Department officials have heard from many stakeholders that an extension would allow them to prepare more robust applications to further development of climate-smart markets for a diverse range of producers.

Funding will be provided to partners through the USDA's [Commodity Credit Corporation](#) for pilot projects to provide incentives to producers and landowners to:

- Implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
- Measure/quantify, monitor, and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and
- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

### **How to Apply**

A range of public and private entities may apply, including:

- County, city or township governments
- Special district governments
- State governments
- Small businesses
- For profit organizations other than small businesses
- Native American tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) (other than institutions of higher education)
- Private institutions of higher education, or
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education.

In response to questions received from potential applicants, USDA has also provided additional clarity regarding requirements in the funding opportunity, including:

- The definition of “domestic applicant;”
- Producers’ eligibility as beneficiaries of the funding; and
- Quantification requirements.

[Frequently asked questions](#) are also available on the website to help answer questions.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and is specifically seeking proposals from entities serving all types of producers, including small or historically underserved producers. Providing sufficient incentives to encourage producer participation and generating both verifiable greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestration benefits are critical to project success and will be considered in the evaluation criteria.

### **More Information**

USDA published a [Request for Information](#) in September 2021 seeking public comment and input on design of this new initiative and used the nearly 400 comments received to inform this funding opportunity. The [funding opportunity has received praise](#) from across multiple industries for its support to create innovative and cost-effective markets.

Visit [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov) for additional information, including details on Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

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## **USDA Updates Eligibility for Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has clarified the definition of a spot market sale and hog eligibility under the [Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program](#) (SMHPP), which assists producers who sold hogs through a spot market sale from April 16, 2020, through Sept. 1, 2020. Hog producers will also now be required to submit documentation to support information provided on their SMHPP application. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications through April 29, 2022, which is an extension of the April 15, 2022, deadline previously set for the program.

USDA is offering the SMHPP in response to a reduction in packer production due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices. The program is part of USDA's broader [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers.

### **SMHPP Program Updates**

When the pandemic disrupted normal marketing channels, including access to packers, producers sold their hogs through cash sales to local processors or butchers, direct sales to individuals and third-party intermediaries, including sale barns or brokers. The use of third-party intermediaries was the only available marketing alternative for many producers and are now included in SMHPP. The only direct to packer sales that are eligible for SMHPP are those through a negotiated sale. Hogs sold through a contract that includes a premium above the spot-market price or other formula such as the wholesale cut-out price remain ineligible. Hogs must be suitable and intended for slaughter to be eligible. Immature swine (pigs) are ineligible.

FSA will now require documentation to support the accuracy of information provided on the FSA-940 Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application, including the number of hogs

reported on the application that were sold through a spot market sale and how the price was determined for the sale.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. To ensure SMHPP funding availability is disbursed equitably to all eligible producers, FSA will now issue payments after the application period ends. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be factored.

### **Applying for Assistance**

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP by April 29, 2022, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application, along with required supporting documentation. Producers can visit [farmers.gov/smhpp](https://farmers.gov/smhpp) for examples of supporting documentation, information on applicant eligibility and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find their local FSA office, producers should visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator). Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

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## **USDA Expands Farmers.gov to Include Farm Records**

Producers with farmers.gov accounts can now access farm records and maps online, the latest self-service feature added to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website.

You can quickly and easily access your land information in real time by desktop computer, tablet or phone. Capabilities include:

- View, print and export detailed farm records such as cropland, base acres, yields, CRP acres, land ownership details, and much more;
- View, print and export farm/tract maps that can be provided to lenders, chemical or fertilizer providers, and FSA for reporting acreage and crop insurance agents; and
- Export common land unit (field) boundaries as ESRI shapefiles.

The ability to access these records on demand without a visit to the service center saves you time and money.

[Farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) now includes the most popular functionalities from FSAFarm+, the FSA portal for producers, while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. A new enhancement expands the scope of accessibility to include farmers and ranchers who are members of an entity, as well as people with a power of attorney form (FSA-211) on file with FSA.

### **Managing USDA Business Online**

Using farmers.gov, producers, entities and those acting on their behalf can also:

- View, upload, download, and e-sign conservation documents.
- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View and submit conservation requests.
- View technical references and submit questions.
- Access information on current and past conservation practices, plans and contracts.
- Report practice completion and request practice certification.
- View farm loan and interest information (producers only).

Future plans include adding the ability to import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture planting boundaries.

To access your information, you'll will need a [USDA eAuth account](#) to login to farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit <https://www.farmers.gov/> and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [Sign In/Sign Up link](#) at the top right of the website. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

In addition to the self-service features available by logging into farmers.gov, the website also has ample information on USDA programs, including pandemic assistance, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance. Recently, USDA updated the navigation and organization of the site as well as added some new webpages, including "[Get Involved](#)," "[Common Forms](#)," and "[Translations](#)." [Learn more about these changes](#).

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## FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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