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Message From the State Executive Director

Last year at this time, we were keeping a close eye on the CT Drought Monitor. This year we've faced a late freeze and now, devastating flooding. My heart goes out to our Connecticut farmers as well as those in our neighboring states, who face risks year after year yet choose to continue providing our communities with the food we need to live. I do not take your hard work for granted and have the utmost respect and gratitude for your dedication, your resiliency, and your steadfastness in the face of such disasters.

For those of you reading who are not producers - I encourage you to show your support for our farmers in any number of ways. Visit a pick-your-own operation with your family. Stop at a farmstand for your produce, dairy, or meat before heading to a grocery store. Look for the grown locally signs when you do shop at a grocery store. Visit the farmer's market in or

around your town. Don't know where there is one? Find farmers markets and farmstands here: <https://ctgrown.org/>. Or if you see a farmer or know a farmer, simply say thank you.

Disaster Resources:

FSA has disaster and emergency programs to aid producers when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger. When natural disaster occurs, there is a process for requesting a USDA Secretarial disaster designation for a county and farmers play a vital role in this process. **Please reach out and let your county office know the impacts that the recent rains and flooding may have had on your operation.** In the meantime, please take a look at the many resources below that may help you during these difficult times.

FSA Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool: Learn about USDA disaster assistance programs that might be right for you by completing five simple steps here <https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery/disaster-tool>

FSA Emergency Loans: Emergency Loans are currently available in all Connecticut counties due to the May Secretarial Disaster Designation. Loan terms may be up to 20 years and the loan maximum is \$500,000. Emergency loan funds may be used to:

- Restore or replace essential property;
- Pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year;
- Pay essential family living expenses;
- Reorganize the farming operation; and
- Refinance certain debts.

For more information on Emergency Loans please call your local FSA office or visit: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/emergency-farm-loans/index>.

Acreage Reporting Relief: If you were unable to complete your acreage reporting by the July 17th deadline this year, the Farm Service Agency is waiving late-filing procedures for 30 days. This means that you can still complete your acreage reporting with no adverse impacts until August 14th, or up to 30 days after the appropriate reporting deadline.

Farm Aid Farmer Resources: Get in touch with Farm Aid's Farmer Services team for one-on-one assistance. Whether you are a beginning or established farmer you can call the Farmer Hotline. A Farmer Services team is there to help point you towards helpful resources that match your needs. If you need to talk to the Hotline Team directly, call 1-800-FARM-AID (1-800-327-6243). The Hotline is staffed Monday through Friday from 9am – 9pm ET; 6am – 6pm PT.

CT Dept of Agriculture Disaster Resources: The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has compiled the following resources to assist agricultural producers as they navigate these challenges. Please visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/ADaRC/Disaster-Relief-Resources> for more information

Farm Stress Support: The State of Connecticut offers the AgriStress Helpline, which provides crisis support and mental health resources for CT farmers and farm families. You can

call or text 833.897.2474 for free and confidential 24/7 crisis support or visit <https://www.ctfarmstressrelief.com/> online for more information on how to get help now and to access tons of mental health and farmer stress resources.

Please reach out and let your county office know the impacts that the recent rains and flooding may have had on your operation.

And please, if you see your neighbor, or another producer in your community struggling, share this message, or our FSA resources with them. FSA is here to help.

Stay safe,



Emily J. Cole, PhD
State Executive Director

Important Upcoming Dates to Remember:

July 26, 2023 - Deadline for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP).

August 1, 2023 - Deadline to request farm transfer or reconstitution for 2023.

August 1, 2023 - Deadline to for County Committee Nominations.

October 2, 2023 - Deadline to submit 2024 NAP Application for Coverage for Garlic, value loss, and controlled environment crops.

October 2, 2023 - Acreage Reporting Deadline for value loss and controlled environment crops.

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.

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.

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.

Nomination 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.

File a Notice of Loss for Failed and Prevented Planted Acres

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds you to report prevented planted and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs.

You should report crop acreage you intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form *CCC-576, Notice of Loss*, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The final planting date for perennial forage and summer seeded crop was July, 17th.

If you're unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports will only be

accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, if you have failed acres, you should also use form CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, to report failed acres.

For hand-harvested crops and certain perishables, you must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative county office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. If you notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576, you are still required to file a CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, within the required 15 calendar days.

For losses on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a *Notice of Loss* within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. You must timely file a *Notice of Loss* for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

To file a *Notice of Loss*, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Deadline July 26 to Apply for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance

The Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) was created to assist certified organic dairy producers facing a unique set of challenges in recent years, including higher costs attributed to the pandemic and drought conditions across the country.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing financial assistance for a producer's projected marketing costs in 2023 based on 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.

Organic dairy producers should apply by July 26, 2023 at their local USDA Service Center.

[Learn more.](#)

Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend August Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production



Meeting will take place August 1, 3-6pm ET

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on August 1 from 3-6pm. [Learn more and register.](#)

USDA Expands Wildlife Conservation with New Investments in Working Lands for Wildlife



USDA announces a five-year commitment to focus its delivery of working-lands conservation in key geographies across the country

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is expanding its work on wildlife conservation, leveraging a suite of voluntary, incentive-based tools. Leveraging resources of the Conservation Reserve Program and the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), the five-year commitment includes significant funding and staff resources, focusing their delivery to working lands in key geographies across the country through a series of new Frameworks for Conservation Action. Learn more [here!](#)

Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

The program website, 22007apply.gov, is now open. The website includes an English- and Spanish-language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at 22007apply.gov or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process will be open from July 7 to October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - 22007apply.gov, which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have

experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

On March 1, 2023, USDA shared initial [details on how the Section 22007 program will work](#), including that the Inflation Reduction Act specifies the Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for providing this assistance through qualified nongovernmental entities, under standards set by USDA. USDA entered into agreements with vendors and cooperators in May.

In addition to the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) opening today, the Inflation Reduction Act also created several other programs that are helping USDA rebuild trust, address systemic issues and improve service to people who may have been underserved by USDA in the past. Information about USDA's equity agenda and progress is available at www.usda.gov/equity.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is **free**.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, promoting competition and fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, 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 Accepts Nearly 2.7 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup, Bringing the Program Closer to Acreage Cap

This year's Grassland CRP signup demonstrates the success and value of working lands conservation programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting offers for nearly 2.7 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grassland signup. This program allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and further CRP conservation efforts. Grassland CRP is part of the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to address climate change and conserve natural resources.

Additionally, USDA has accepted more than 1 million acres through the General CRP signup, and more than 465,800 acres have been submitted through the Continuous CRP signup so far this year.

Top states include:

- Colorado, 430,899 acres;
- Nebraska, 417,865 acres; and
- South Dakota, 325,443 acres.

Grassland CRP leverages working lands practices to improve biodiversity and conserve environmentally sensitive land. To target conservation in key geographies, USDA prioritizes land within two National Priority Zones: the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and the Dust Bowl area. FSA accepted more than 911,000 acres in these two zones. Land enrolled in these zones will contribute to broader USDA conservation efforts through [Working Lands for Wildlife](#) by conserving working grasslands and other lands that underpin iconic big game migrations.

Grasslands enrolled in CRP help sequester carbon in vegetation and soil, while enhancing resilience to drought and wildfire. Meanwhile, producers can still conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land, which supports agricultural production.

Broadening Reach of Program As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers, limited-resource producers, and military veterans, received 20 additional ranking points to enhance their offers. From more than 6,400 underserved producers, USDA accepted offers of more than 1.8 million acres, about 74% of those who submitted applications. Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, and non-profit 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

Producers can still make an offer to participate in CRP through the [Continuous CRP signup](#), which is ongoing, by contacting FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

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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 usda.gov.

USDA Invests \$7.4 Million in 25 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Efforts



Recipients include project in Connecticut

USDA is investing \$7.4 million in 25 selected grants that support urban agriculture and innovative production. Selected grant recipients, including community gardens and nonprofit farms, will increase food production and access in economically distressed communities, provide job training and education, and allow partners to develop business plans and zoning proposals. These grants build on \$40 million in projects funded since 2020 and are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture through its Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). Funding limits only allowed USDA to select the top scoring 10% of the applications reviewed. This year, USDA received more than 300 applications, which is twice last year's applications. Learn more [here!](#)

FSA Offers Safety Net Programs for Honeybee Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers two programs that have specific safety net benefits for producers of honeybees and honey. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) assist producers when disasters impact honey production or damage or destroy colonies, hives or honeybee feed.

NAP is designed to reduce financial losses when natural disasters result in lower yields or crop losses, including honey. NAP coverage is equivalent to catastrophic insurance, meaning it covers up to 50 percent of a producer's normal yield (must have at least a 50 percent loss) at 55 percent of the average market price. The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

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.

You must apply for NAP coverage by Dec. 31 prior to the year for which you're seeking coverage.

ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

Both the NAP and ELAP programs require you to report the number of colonies you have in production to FSA by Jan. 2, 2024. You must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of changes in the total number of colonies or when honeybees are moved to another county.

For both programs, you must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent.

To learn more about programs for honey and honeybee producers, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

RMA Offers Insurance Resources

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) serves America's agricultural producers through effective, market-based risk management tools to strengthen the economic stability of

agricultural producers and rural communities. RMA is committed to increasing the availability and effectiveness of Federal crop insurance as a risk management tool.

RMA manages the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) to provide innovative crop insurance products to America's farmers and ranchers. Approved Insurance Providers (AIP) sell and service Federal crop insurance policies in every state and in Puerto Rico through a public-private partnership with RMA. RMA backs the AIPs who share the risks associated with catastrophic losses due to major weather events. [Learn more by visiting RMA's website.](#)

Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- A married woman must sign her given name: Mrs. Mary Doe, not Mrs. John Doe
- For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent

Note, by signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local [FSA office](#).

Cover Crop Guidelines

The Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop consistent, simple and a flexible policy for cover crop practices.

Cover crops, such as grasses, legumes and forbs, can be planted: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

Termination:

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/ and click "Cover Crop Termination Guidelines."

The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is **not** considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Reporting:

The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations, a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

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