

## In This Issue:

- [Message From the State Executive Director](#)
- [FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections](#)
- [USDA to Begin Issuing \\$1.75 Billion to Agricultural Producers Through Critical Emergency Relief Programs](#)
- [Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations](#)
- [USDA Offers Disaster Program Flexibilities for Flood-Impacted Producers in the Northeast](#)
- [Biden-Harris Administration Makes Available Historic \\$3 Billion for Climate-Smart Practices on Agricultural Lands Through Investing in America Agenda](#)
- [USDA's Conservation Reserve Program Pays More Than \\$1.77 Billion to America's Producers in Support of Conservation and Climate-Smart Agriculture](#)
- [USDA's New Shellfish Pilot Crop Insurance Program Provides Oyster Producers with More Coverage Options](#)
- [Cost Share for Organic Certification](#)
- [Share Your Harvesting Experience for Farmers.gov's #Harvest2023 campaign](#)

---

## Message From the State Executive Director



Fall harvest is in full swing, leaves are changing color, and for most of us in CT the first hard frost has yet to come. While it has been slightly rainier than average, October has also been mild, and that is a welcome change to the severity of this spring and summer's weather events.

I'd like to highlight a few of the USDA's recent efforts support our nation's farmers and ranchers through addressing past discrimination with our programs, providing financial assistance to farmers who have been impacted by natural disasters, and advancing the support of climate-smart agriculture and forestry.

- The Discrimination Financial Assistance Program is a new program, authorized by Section 22007(e) of the Inflation Reduction Act, that will provide financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to 2021. Details about the program are available at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov). Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970. Filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer. The application period is open and runs through January 13, 2024.

- More than \$1.75 billion dollars in assistance payments have gone out nation wide through Phase 2 of the Emergency Relief Program and the Emergency Livestock Relief Program for disasters that occurred during the 2020 and 2021 crop years.
- The USDA is making more than \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, funded through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
- Our sister agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has also expanded the Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Mitigation Activities eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for fiscal year 2024 through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This funding of climate smart practices will provide direct climate mitigation benefits, advance a host of other environmental co-benefits, and expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. Interested producers should contact the NRCS at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

October is a full month – it is LGBTQ+ awareness month and we celebrate National Farmer's Day (Oct 12) and World Hunger Day (Oct 16). Looking to November, FSA staff look forward to honoring the service of military Veterans on Veteran's Day and celebrate the histories, cultures, and contributions of our nation's first peoples as part of Native American Heritage Month. Also, coming up in November: be sure to keep an eye out for and complete your County Committee Election Ballots.

I find myself continually humbled in my role here at FSA. I am both honored and thankful to serve the great producers across the state. I wish you all a healthy harvest and a Happy Halloween.

Stay safe,



Emily J. Cole, PhD  
State Executive Director

**Important Upcoming Dates to Remember:**

**October 30** - Updated deadline to apply for the [Mike Loss Program](#) (MLP).

**October 31** - Deadline to apply for the [Inflation Reduction Act Section 22007 – Discrimination Financial Assistance Program](#)

**November 1** - Deadline to apply for [Organic Certification Cost Share Program \(OCCSP\)](#)

**November 20** - Deadline to apply for [NAP Coverage](#) for perennial crops (orchard crops, forage, asparagus, strawberries, caneberries, and grapes, etc.).

**November 28** - Deadline to apply to the [Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program](#) (FLSP).

**December 31** - Deadline to apply for the Farm Loan [Extraordinary Measures Assistance](#) Program.

**January 2** - Deadline to apply for [NAP Coverage](#) for maple sap and honey.

---

## FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2023 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 6, 2023, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 4, 2023.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive, indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must:

- Be of legal voting age or, if not of legal voting age, supervise and conduct the farming operation of an entire farm.
- Have an interest in a farm or ranch as either:
  - An individual who meets one or more of the following:
  - Is eligible and capable to vote in one's own right.

- Is a partner of a general partnership.
- Is a member of a joint venture.
- Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information to FSA about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received program benefits.

Eligible voters in Local Administrative Areas who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local FSA county office. Customers can identify which LAA they or their farming operation is in by using our new GIS locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2024.

---

## USDA to Begin Issuing \$1.75 Billion to Agricultural Producers Through Critical Emergency Relief Programs

### Farm Service Agency is working to make payments as soon as possible

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that it will begin issuing more than \$1.75 billion in emergency relief payments to eligible farmers and livestock producers. These much-needed payments are helping farming and ranching operations recover following natural disasters in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

### Emergency Livestock Relief Program

This week, FSA will issue more than \$581 million in 2021 and 2022 drought and wildfire emergency relief to eligible ranchers.

FSA is closing out the [Emergency Livestock Relief Program](#) (ELRP) for losses suffered in 2021. ELRP Phase Two payments are estimated at \$115.7 million. Ranchers who lost grazing acres due to drought and wildfire and received assistance through ELRP Phase One will soon receive an additional payment through ELRP Phase Two. This second payment will be equal to 20% of the 2021 gross ELRP Phase One payment. ELRP Phase Two payments to producers will be automatic with no application required. In April 2022, FSA staff processed more than 100,000 payments through ELRP Phase One and paid eligible ranchers more than \$600 million for 2021 grazing losses.

In 2022, ranchers continued to experience significant loss of grazing acres due to drought and wildfire. To help mitigate these losses, eligible ranchers will receive ELRP disaster assistance payments for increases in supplemental feed costs. To expedite payments, determine producer eligibility and calculate the ELRP 2022 payment, FSA is using livestock inventories and drought-affected forage acreage or restricted animal units and grazing days due to wildfire already reported to FSA by ranchers when they submitted their Livestock Forage Disaster Program applications. ELRP payments for 2022 losses are estimated at \$465.4 million and will be automatic with no application required.

## Emergency Relief Program Phase Two

FSA is closing out Phase Two of the [Emergency Relief Program](#) (ERP) this week through the delivery of more than \$1.17 billion in crop disaster assistance payments to producers of eligible crops who suffered losses, measured through decreases in revenue, due to qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2020 and 2021. ERP Phase Two was intended primarily for producers of crops that were not covered by federal crop insurance or FSA's Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Previously, through ERP Phase one, FSA staff processed more than 300,000 applications and paid an estimated 217,000 eligible producers more than \$7.4 billion.

### More Information

These programs represent a few of FSA's extensive commodity, conservation, credit, disaster recovery and safety-net programs. By the close of the fiscal year on Sept. 30, for all farm and farm loan programs — including vital access to [capital for distressed borrowers](#) — USDA, through the delivery of FSA programs, will have invested more than \$19 billion in America's agricultural producers with more economic support on the way in fiscal year 2024.

For more information on available FSA programs, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

---

## Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations

The August milk margin triggered the eighth consecutive payment for dairy producers who obtained [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) for the 2023 program year. August's income over feed margin is \$6.46 per hundredweight (cwt.) with projected DMC payments totaling \$120 million. To date, including the projected August payments, dairy producers have received more than \$1.2 billion in much needed economic support for 2023 and margin forecasts indicate the likelihood of more to come before the end of the calendar year.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program administered by USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

### Additional Dairy Assistance

DMC complements other assistance available to dairy producers, including the [Milk Loss Program](#) (MLP) and the [Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program](#) (ODMAP). MLP covers milk that was dumped or removed, without compensation, from the commercial milk market due to qualifying weather events and the consequences of those weather events that inhibited delivery or storage of milk (e.g., power outages, impassable roads, infrastructure losses, etc.) during calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

USDA recently announced a second round of payments for dairy producers through ODMAP, providing an additional \$5 million to help dairy producers with marketing costs to mitigate

market volatility, higher input and transportation costs and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. FSA has already paid out \$15 million in the first round of payments for eligible producers, bringing total ODMAP payments to \$20 million.

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

---

## USDA Offers Disaster Program Flexibilities for Flood-Impacted Producers in the Northeast

Contact your local USDA service center for more information

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) have authorized policy flexibilities for key disaster assistance programs and crop insurance to aid Northeast agricultural operations that have been significantly impacted by recent flooding in 2023.

### Farm Service Agency Policy Flexibilities

FSA has authorized policy exceptions in all flood-impacted counties in **Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont**.

These flexibilities apply to the following commodity price support, crop and livestock disaster assistance and conservation programs:

- [Farm Storage Facility Loans \(FSFL\)](#) borrowers experiencing financial hardship can request an annual installment deferral which will extend the next installment due date by one year. FSFL provides eligible producers with financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.
- For livestock producers in need of alternative feed sources, FSA is authorizing emergency haying for up to 60 calendar days or emergency grazing for up to 90 calendar days on [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) acres. CRP participants enter 10 to 15-year contracts and agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.
- For producers who have a [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) policy on crop for which federal crop insurance is not available, FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirement for filing a notice of loss for hand-harvested and other applicable crops. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirements for notice of loss for hand-harvested and other applicable crops.
- The deadline to file a 2023 notice of loss for [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) assistance has been extended to

Jan. 30, 2024. ELAP compensates eligible producers for hive loss, stored feed and grazing losses.

- The deadline for filing a notice of loss for the [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) has been extended through Jan. 30, 2024. LIP provides benefits to eligible livestock owners and contract growers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by specific adverse weather including floods.
- The deadline for qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to submit an application and supporting documentation for [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) has been extended through Jan. 30, 2024. TAP provides financial cost-share assistance to replant or, where applicable, rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost by natural disasters.

Additionally, Producers who are experiencing financial hardships and find themselves behind on their FSA [Marketing Assistance Loan \(MAL\)](#) repayment should contact their USDA Service Center to discuss repayment concerns with FSA staff. MALs provide interim financing at harvest time to help agricultural producers meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

### **Exceptions for Acreage Reporting Requirements**

FSA uses annual acreage reports, as provided by producers for all cropland on a farm to determine program payment eligibility. The recent extreme flooding in the Northeast created challenges for producers needing to timely file their 2023 crop acreage report by the July 17 deadline. To ensure producers have adequate time to file, FSA is offering the following acreage reporting flexibilities for producers in flood-impacted counties:

- 2023 Crop Year – All acreage reports filed within 30 days after the acreage reporting date will be considered timely filed. This policy does not impact 2022 late-filed acreage reports which can only be accepted through the 2023 reporting date.
- 2024 Crop Year – For any crop that has an acreage reporting date before August 1, 2023, all acreage reports filed within 30 days after the reporting date will be considered timely.
- Organic Plans – Extreme flooding has caused a delay in producers receiving organic certifications. Check with your local FSA office for extended dates to submit documentation.

### **Risk Management Agency Flexibilities**

RMA is authorizing crop insurance companies to apply flexibilities to reporting requirements and the claims process for producers impacted by the recent flooding in **Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont**. This ensures that producers will get paid as soon as possible without unnecessary delays.

Key flexibilities include:

Producers who were unable to report their acreage by the deadline of July 17 due to the flooding will not lose coverage. The crop insurance company will address these situations on a case-by-case basis.

Once a loss is known, producers typically have 72 hours to report a loss to their crop insurance agent. These modified procedures allow crop insurance companies to waive this requirement on a case-by-case basis when producers are not able to report due to the flooding event impacting communication and related infrastructure.

Approved Insurance Providers are authorized to provide additional time for policyholders to make payment of premium and administrative fees.

Electronic communication such as phone, text, or email are authorized for the producer to report information to their agent, such as production or policy elections. Additionally, the crop insurance company may provide verbal consent to sell, destroy or move crops if sending written notification is not feasible.

Crop insurance companies can determine flooded crops to be a total loss and start the loss adjustment process if the producer certifies the crop will be destroyed.

### **More Information**

On [farmers.gov](https://www.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](#).

---

## **Biden-Harris Administration Makes Available Historic \$3 Billion for Climate-Smart Practices on Agricultural Lands Through Investing in America Agenda**

USDA is making more than \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda.

These funds are provided by President Biden's [Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate and conservation investment in history](#). This law invests an additional \$19.5 billion for USDA's popular conservation programs. These programs also advance the President's Justice40 Initiative, which aims to ensure 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain climate, clean energy, and other federal investments reach disadvantaged communities that have been marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. On the heels of [last week's announcement](#) that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) saw record producer interest in these resources in fiscal year 2023, the agency is now accepting applications from producers interested in this additional conservation assistance for fiscal year 2024.

These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers apply conservation to millions of acres of land. These funds provide direct climate



mitigation benefits, advance a host of other environmental co-benefits, and expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more.

USDA is opening up the application period for fiscal year 2024 conservation assistance giving producers the opportunity to apply for this historic funding. However, in the event of a lapse in government funding, technical assistance, one-on-one help in answering questions, and other support for producers in navigating the application process would not be immediately available until the funding lapse ends. In the event of a funding lapse, NRCS would notify producers when staff are available to assist.

## **What's New**

### ***Expansion of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Activities supported by the Inflation Reduction Act***

NRCS is increasing [Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#) eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for fiscal year 2024 through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). These in-demand activities are expected to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or increases in carbon sequestration as well as significant other benefits to natural resources like soil health, water quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat and air quality.

In response to feedback received from conservation partners, producers and NRCS staff across the country, NRCS considered and evaluated activities based on scientific literature demonstrating expected climate change mitigation benefits. To learn more, download the [list of practices](#) and a [fact sheet](#).

When applied through this framework, these activities are expected to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or increases in carbon sequestration. NRCS will continue to evaluate additional practices as science progresses and will evaluate and identify quantification methodologies during the fiscal year.

### ***Expansion of priorities for the ACEP investments through the Inflation Reduction Act***

Additionally, NRCS is expanding the national priority areas eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for [Agricultural Conservation Easements Program](#) (ACEP) easements in fiscal year 2024..

For ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ALE), NRCS is prioritizing securing:

- Grasslands in areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores.
- Agricultural lands under threat of conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- State-specific priorities including rice cultivation on subsiding highly organic soils.

For ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE), NRCS is prioritizing:

- Land with soils high in organic carbon.

- Eligible lands that will be restored to and managed as forests like bottomland hardwood forests.
- Eligible lands in existing forest cover that will be managed as forests.
- Several geographically specific priorities (i.e., former cranberry bogs, wet meadows, and ephemeral wetlands in grassland ecosystems).

## Background

The Inflation Reduction Act provides funds to the EQIP, CSP, ACEP and [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP). For fiscal year 2024, which begins Oct. 1, 2023, the Inflation Reduction Act provides an additional \$1.65 billion for EQIP, \$472 million for CSP, and \$189 million for ACEP, and \$754 million for RCPP.

## How to Apply

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but producers interested in this cycle of Inflation Reduction Act funding should apply as soon as possible. Producers interested in EQIP or CSP should apply by [their state's ranking dates](#) for consideration this year. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.

Similarly, NRCS accepts applications year-round for ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE), producers interested in this funding cycle must apply by Nov. 13, 2023. NRCS will also consider previously unfunded applications in this round.

NRCS plans to roll out the next RCPP funding opportunity in late January 2024.

NRCS will announce other opportunities for agreements and partnerships at the state level for fiscal year 2024 in the coming months. The Inflation Reduction Act provides funding to support those strategic partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. This will include outreach to underserved producers to ensure Inflation Reduction Act climate funding is reaching those who have been previously unable to access conservation assistance.

Interested producers should contact the NRCS at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

---

# USDA's Conservation Reserve Program Pays More Than \$1.77 Billion to America's Producers in Support of Conservation and Climate-Smart Agriculture

**Agricultural producers and landowners have chosen conservation on more than 23 million acres of private land nationwide**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued more than \$1.77 billion this year to agricultural producers and landowners through its Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a critical piece of the Department's efforts to support climate-smart agriculture and forestry on working lands. This year, CRP's more than 667,000 participants received payments from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) for their voluntary conservation efforts on more than 23 million acres of private land. Since 2021, CRP has grown by 21% in terms of acres enrolled, testament to the Biden-Harris administration's program improvement efforts.

Top five states for CRP participant payments:

- Iowa, \$402,508,900
- Illinois, \$172,723,800
- Minnesota, \$150,773,400
- South Dakota, \$129,545,200
- Missouri, \$99,849,600

### **Improvements to CRP**

Since 2021, FSA has made improvements to the program:

- **Introducing a new climate-smart practice incentive** for CRP general and continuous signups designed to reward participants who implement conservation practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Enabling additional soil rental rate adjustments** or rate flexibilities, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increasing payments for practice incentives** from 20% to 50%. This incentive, in addition to cost share payments, for continuous CRP practices is based on establishment cost.
- **Increasing payments for water quality practices rates** from 10% to 20% for certain water quality benefiting practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers and filter strips.
- **Establishing a Grassland CRP minimum rental rate** benefitting more than 1,000 counties with rates currently below the \$13 minimum.

Additionally, FSA made significant improvements to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that reduce barriers by making the partnership program more accessible to a broader cross-section of agricultural producers and new conservation partners. These program improvements include the flexibility for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance and the ability for FSA to invest in additional, full-time staff devoted to working directly with our CREP partners and program specialists in FSA's state offices.

Since 2021, FSA has also entered into the first-ever Tribal Nations CREP agreements in partnership with the Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Oglala Sioux Tribes. And in 2022, USDA entered into the Big Sioux River Watershed CREP agreement with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks to assist farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife habitat, and create public hunting and fishing access. These CREP agreements reflect priorities and goals of USDA to broaden

the scope and reach of its voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs to engage underserved producers.

FSA's conservation programs had a strong showing in 2023. FSA partnered with producers and landowners to enroll 3.9 million CRP this year—including 927,000 enrolled acres through General CRP, 2.3 million acres enrolled in Grassland CRP and 694,000 acres enrolled in Continuous CRP. These results underscore the continued importance of CRP as a tool to help producers invest in the long-term health, sustainability, and profitability of their land and natural resources.

#### More Information

CRP is a voluntary program contract with agricultural producers through which environmentally sensitive agricultural land is devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

To learn more about CRP and other FSA programs, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center.

More information [here](#).

---

## USDA's New Shellfish Pilot Crop Insurance Program Provides Oyster Producers with More Coverage Options

USDA announced that oyster producers are now eligible for protection against losses due to named storms, excessive heat during a low tide event, freeze during a low tide event, or low salinity due to excessive rainfall. The new Shellfish crop insurance program is an actual production history-price component (APH-PC) coverage policy for container-grown oysters commercially cultivated for the fresh half shell market. This new program will be available beginning with the 2024 crop year, and producers have until Nov. 30 to purchase this policy.

For the APH-PC coverage policy, the producer selects the percentage of the average yield to insure—from 50% to 75%. Additionally, the producer also selects the percentage of the crop price to insure, between 55% and 100%, as established annually by RMA. If producers purchase additional levels of coverage, they may also increase their price guarantee using their historical sales records. The program uses county loss triggers combined with producers' sales records to confirm a loss has occurred. The insurance guarantee is based on the number of oysters expected to be harvested between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31.

Insurability requires a minimum of four years of records and a minimum seed size of four millimeters.

This new Shellfish crop insurance program is available in select counties in Alabama, California, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.

RMA also offers crop insurance for certain aquaculture categories through crop insurance programs for Group Risk Plan oysters and cultivated clams, and the Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) plan of insurance. WFRP provides a risk management safety net for all commodities in an operation under one insurance policy.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](https://rma.usda.gov) or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

---

## Cost Share for Organic Certification

As part of USDA's broader effort to support organic producers and in response to stakeholder feedback, this year the Farm Service Agency increased the cost share amount under the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), which helps organic producers cover organic certification costs, to the maximum amount allowed by statute. Specifically, FSA will cover up to 75% of costs associated with organic certification, up to \$750 for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling and state organic program fees (California only). OCCSP will cover costs incurred from Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2023.

FSA begins accepting applications for OCCSP Monday, May 15. Applications are due Oct. 31, 2023. To apply, producers and handlers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#). As part of completing the OCCSP application, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses. Organic producers and handlers may also apply for OCCSP through participating state departments of agriculture.

FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA will post a synopsis of the funding opportunity on [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) and will send more information to all eligible state departments of agriculture. Additional details can be found on the [OCCSP webpage](#). More information about these initiatives and more can be found at [farmers.gov/organic-transition-initiative](https://farmers.gov/organic-transition-initiative).

---

## Share Your Harvesting Experience for Farmers.gov's #Harvest2023 campaign



### **Share what you're harvesting this season on Farmers.gov social media**

As America's farmers harvest the crops that feed, clothe, and fuel our world, let's fill the Farmers.gov social media feed with their stories about this year's harvest season. We'd also like to see how it's going for farmers that participated in our #Plant2023 campaign in the spring.

To share your experience on @FarmersGov social media, follow these steps:

- Collect photos of what's happening on your operation as you harvest.
- If you're comfortable, we'd love to see the people that make it happen, like friends and family.
- Write an email to [FP.Social@usda.gov](mailto:FP.Social@usda.gov), attach your photos/video, and tell us:
  - Your name, the location of your operation, and the name of your operation
  - Your operation's Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter pages, if you have them.
  - What are you harvesting this year?
  - Where does your harvest go? How is it used?
  - What are your personal thoughts on this year's harvest season?

Please note that by submitting your photo/video, you are granting USDA permission to use these materials for outreach and education purposes.

Remember to follow @FarmersGov on [Facebook](#), [X](#) (formerly known as Twitter), and [Instagram](#), and we look forward to sharing your story!

## **Connecticut State FSA Office**

344 Merrow Road, Suite B  
Tolland, CT 06084-3917

Phone: 860-871-4090

Fax: 855-934-2463

**State Executive Director:**

Emily J. Cole, PhD

**State Office Staff:**

Nathan Wilson, *District Director*

Jule Dybdahl, *Administrative Officer*

A.J. Bellagamba, *Program Specialist*

Rebecca Palmer, *Program Specialist*

Claire Vaterlaus-Staby, *Administrative Specialist*

**State Committee Chair:**

Mary Concklin

**State Committee Members:**

Amy Chesmer

Shawn Joseph

Will O'Meara