

January 12, 2021



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Florida FSA Newsletter

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### Florida Farm Service Agency

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<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/fl>

#### State Committee:

Michelle Williamson (Chair)  
Mike Adams  
Jimmy LeFils  
Mack Glass  
Mark Soddors

#### State Executive Director:

Sherry McCorkle

### USDA Seeks Members for Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking members for a new advisory committee on urban agriculture, part of a broader effort to focus on the needs of urban farmers. The 12-person committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices as well as identify any barriers to urban agriculture.

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise, including:

- Four agricultural producers (two agricultural producers in an urban area or urban cluster and two agricultural producers who use innovative technology).
- Two representatives from an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One representative of a nonprofit organization, which may include a public health, environmental or community organization.

**Division Chiefs:****Administrative Officer**

Mark Cotrell

**Farm Program**

Tom Hockert

**Farm Loans**

Christy Marshall

- One representative of business and economic development, which may include a business development entity, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.
- One individual from a financing entity.
- Two individuals with related experience or expertise in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices, as determined by the Secretary.

Please contact your local FSA Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership. Self-nominations are also welcome.

Nominations should include a cover letter, resume and a [background form](#). Nomination packages must be submitted by mail or email by March 5, 2021. They should be addressed to Ronald Harris, Designated Federal Officer, Director of Outreach and Partnerships, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 6006-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, or emailed to [Ronald.Harris@usda.gov](mailto:Ronald.Harris@usda.gov).

The 2018 Farm Bill established the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and directed USDA to form this advisory committee as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture. It is led by the NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction. More information is available in this notice on the Federal Register or at [farmers.gov/urban](http://farmers.gov/urban).

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## Quality Loss Assistance Now Available for Eligible Producers Affected by 2018, 2019 Natural Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that signup for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program will begin Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. Funded by the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, this new program provides assistance to producers who suffered eligible crop quality losses due to natural disasters occurring in 2018 and 2019. The deadline to apply for QLA is Friday, March 5, 2021.

**Eligible Crops**

Eligible crops include those for which [federal crop insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) coverage is available, except for grazed crops and value loss crops, such as honey, maple sap, aquaculture, floriculture, mushrooms, ginseng root, ornamental nursery, Christmas trees, and turfgrass sod.

Additionally, crops that were sold or fed to livestock or that are in storage may be eligible; however, crops that were destroyed before harvest are not eligible. Crop quality losses occurring after harvest, due to deterioration in storage, or that could have been mitigated, are also not eligible.

Assistance is based on a producer's harvested affected production of an eligible crop, which must have had at least a 5% quality loss reflected through a quality discount; or for forage crops, a nutrient loss, such as total digestible nutrients.

### **Qualifying Disaster Events**

Losses must have been a result of a qualifying disaster event (hurricane, excessive moisture, flood, qualifying drought, tornado, typhoon, volcanic activity, snowstorm, or wildfire) or related condition that occurred in calendar years 2018 and/or 2019.

Assistance is available for eligible producers in counties that received a qualifying Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or Secretarial Disaster Designation because of one or more of the qualifying disaster events or related conditions.

Lists of counties with Presidential Emergency Disaster Declarations and Secretarial Disaster Designations for all qualifying disaster events for 2018 and 2019 are available [here](#). For drought, producers are eligible for QLA if the loss occurred in an area within a county rated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) as having a D3 (extreme drought) or higher intensity level during 2018 or 2019.

Producers in counties that did not receive a qualifying declaration or designation may still apply but must also provide supporting documentation to establish that the crop was directly affected by a qualifying disaster event.

To determine QLA eligibility and payments, FSA considers the total quality loss caused by all qualifying natural disasters in cases where a crop was impacted by multiple events.

### **Applying for QLA**

When applying, producers are asked to provide verifiable documentation to support claims of quality loss or nutrient loss in the case of forage crops. For crops that have been sold, grading must have been completed within 30 days of harvest, and for forage crops, a laboratory analysis must have been completed within 30 days of harvest.

Some acceptable forms of documentation include sales receipts from buyers, settlement sheets, truck or warehouse scale tickets, written sales contracts, similar records that represent actual and specific quality loss information, and forage tests for nutritional values.

### **Payments Calculations and Limitations**

QLA payments are based on formulas for the type of crop (forage or non-forage) and loss documentation submitted. Based on this documentation FSA is calculating payments based on the producer's own individual loss or based on the county average loss. More information on payments can be found on [farmers.gov/quality-loss](https://farmers.gov/quality-loss).

FSA will issue payments once the application period ends. If the total amount of calculated QLA payments exceeds available program funding, payments will be prorated.

For each crop year, 2018, 2019 and 2020, the maximum amount that a person or legal entity may receive, directly or indirectly, is \$125,000. Payments made to a joint operation (including a general partnership or joint venture) will not exceed \$125,000, multiplied by the number of persons and legal entities that comprise the ownership of the joint operation. A person or legal entity is ineligible for QLA payment if the person's or legal entity's average Adjusted Gross Income exceeds \$900,000, unless at least 75% is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities.

### **Future Insurance Coverage Requirements**

All producers receiving QLA Program payments are required to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. Wildlife and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) participants who already met the WHIP+ requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage are considered to have thereby met the requirement to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage for QLA. If eligible, QLA participants may meet the

insurance purchase requirement by purchasing [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#) coverage offered through USDA's Risk Management Agency.

**More Information** For more information, visit [farmers.gov/quality-loss](https://farmers.gov/quality-loss), or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877-508-8364.

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## Emergency Conservation Program Assistance Available in 4 Florida Counties

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) in 4 counties to address damages from Hurricane Sally. ECP signup began on January 4, 2021 and ends on March 4, 2021.

The following counties are eligible for ECP assistance: **Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton.**

ECP helps you with the cost to restore the farmland to pre-disaster conditions. You may receive up to 75 percent of the cost of approved restoration activity. Limited resource, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive up to 90 percent cost-share. A 25 percent advance payment will be allowed for repair or replacement of fencing. The payment limitation for ECP is \$500,000 per disaster, and the funds are limited to activities to return the land to the relative pre-disaster condition.

The approved ECP practices under this authorization include: **Debris Removal; Grading, Shaping, Releveling or Similar Measures; Restoring Permanent Fences; Restoring Conservation Structures and Other Installations.**

You must apply for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. FSA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review process is required to be completed before any actions are taken. Submitting an application after reconstructive work has been completed may not qualify for ECP. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.

FSA county committees will evaluate applications based on an on-site inspection of the damaged land, taking into consideration the type and extent of the damage. An on-site inspection does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be provided.

For more information on ECP, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover).

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## Emergency Forest Restoration Assistance Available in 4 Florida Counties

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting applications for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) in **Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton** counties to address damages from Hurricane Sally.

EFRP provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land to enable them to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster. EFRP signup began on January 4, 2021 and ends on March 4, 2021.

After applications are received, local FSA county committees determine land eligibility using on-site damage inspections that assess the type and extent of damage and approve applications.

Eligible forest restoration practices include **debris removal, such as down or damaged trees, in order to establish a new stand or provide natural regeneration; site preparation, planting materials and labor to replant forest land; restoration of forestland roads, fire lanes, fuel breaks or erosion control structures; fencing, tree shelters and tree tubes to protect trees from wildlife damage; and wildlife enhancement to provide cover openings and wildlife habitat.**

In order to meet eligibility requirements, NIPF land must have existing tree cover or had tree cover immediately before the natural disaster occurred and be sustainable for growing trees. The land must also be owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation or other private legal entity that has definitive decision-making authority over the land. The natural disaster must have resulted in damage that if untreated would impair or endanger the natural resources on the land and/or materially affect future use of the land.

For more information contact the local County USDA Service Center or visit [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover).

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## Fresh Market Tomato and Pecan Growers Need to Make Insurance Decisions Soon

The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida fresh market tomato and pecan growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2021 crop year is January 31. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the January 31 sales closing date to do so.

Federal crop insurance is critical to the farm safety net. It helps producers and owners manage revenue risks and strengthens the rural economy. Coverage is available for fresh market tomatoes in **Gadsden, Holmes, and Jackson** counties. Coverage is available for pecans in **Jefferson** County.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2021 crop year.

RMA is authorizing additional flexibilities due to coronavirus while continuing to support producers, working through Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to deliver services, including processing policies, claims, and agreements. RMA staff are working with AIPs and other customers by phone, mail and electronically to continue supporting crop insurance coverage for producers. Farmers with crop insurance questions or needs should continue to contact their insurance agents about conducting business remotely (by telephone or email). More information can be found at [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available online using the RMA Agent Locator. Producers can use the RMA Cost Estimator to get a premium amount estimate of their insurance needs online. Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [www.rma.usda.gov](https://www.rma.usda.gov).

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## USDA Announces CRP General Signup Ends February 12

Agricultural producers and private landowners interested in the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) can sign up for the popular program from Jan. 4, 2021, until Feb. 12, 2021. The competitive program, administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits

to their local region and the nation's environment and economy. CRP general signup is held annually and is competitive; general signup includes increased opportunities for wildlife habitat enrollment through the [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement](#) (SAFE) initiative.

New cropland offered in the program must have been planted for four out of six crop years from 2012 to 2017. Additionally, producers with land already enrolled but expiring on Sept. 30, 2021, can re-enroll this year. The acreage offered by producers and landowners is evaluated competitively; accepted offers will begin Oct. 1, 2021.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. The program marked its [35-year anniversary](#) in December 2020. Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks.
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95% and 85%, respectively.
- Sequestering an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road.
- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times.
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows, and many other birds.

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## USDA Supports U.S. Seafood Industry Impacted by Retaliatory Tariffs

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide approximately \$530 million to support the U.S. seafood industry and commercially licensed fishermen impacted by retaliatory tariffs from foreign governments. The funding will be provided through the Seafood Trade Relief Program and funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The Seafood Trade Relief Program funding will support the following seafood types:

- Atka mackerel
- Crab (Dungeness, King, Snow, Southern Tanner)
- Flounder
- Geoduck
- Goosefish
- Herrings
- Lobster
- Pacific Cod
- Pacific Ocean Perch
- Pollock
- Sablefish
- Salmon
- Sole
- Squid
- Tuna
- Turbot

Fishermen can sign-up for relief through the program from September 14, 2020 to January 15, 2021. Fishermen should apply through their local USDA Service Center. To find your local Service



Center, visit [www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator](http://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator). The application can be found at [www.farmers.gov/seafood](http://www.farmers.gov/seafood).

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## Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

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## Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,776,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

For more information on guaranteed loans, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Dates to Remember

January 15 - STRP application deadline  
January 18 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

February 12 - CRP General Signup Ends  
February 15 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).