

June 14, 2021



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Florida FSA Newsletter

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Producers to Receive Assistance through QLA and WHIP+

More than \$1 billion in payments will be released over the next several weeks starting June 15 for agricultural producers with approved applications for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) Program and for producers who have already received payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). These U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs provide disaster assistance to producers who suffered losses to 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

Producers weathered some significant natural disasters in 2018 and 2019, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provided support for crop value and production losses through QLA and crop quantity losses through WHIP+.

QLA Payments

Division Chiefs:**Administrative Officer**

Mark Cotrell

Farm Program

Tom Hockert

Farm Loans

Christy Marshall

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

QLA provides assistance to crop and forage producers who suffered a quality loss due to qualifying natural disasters occurring in 2018 or 2019. FSA will begin issuing payments to producers on June 15. FSA accepted applications from Jan. 6 to April 9, 2021. Based on these QLA applications, producers will receive 100% of the calculated assistance under QLA.

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.

Second WHIP+ Payments

WHIP+ provides payments to producers to offset production losses due to hurricanes, wildfires, and other qualifying natural disasters that occurred in 2018 and 2019. WHIP+ covered losses of crops, trees, bushes and vines that occurred as a result of those disaster events.

Producers who applied for and have received their first WHIP+ payment can expect to receive the second payment beginning in mid-June for eligible crop losses. Due to budget constraints, producers received an initial WHIP+ payment for 2019 crop losses equal to 50% of the calculated payment. This second payment will be equal to 40% of the calculated payment for a total 90% WHIP+ program payment. This second round of WHIP+ payments are expected to exceed \$700 million. A third round of payments may be issued if sufficient funds become available. Producers with 2018 crop losses have already been compensated at 100%.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers receiving QLA Program and WHIP+ payments are required to purchase [federal crop insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. 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

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. 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](#).

U.S Drought Monitor Now Searchable by Tribal Area

Every Thursday morning, the U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) provides the latest snapshot of evolving drought conditions across the United States and its territories. Now, USDM users can also search for drought conditions for tribal areas across the country.

When you visit the [Drought Monitor](#) and search the USDM's numerous data and mapping products, "Tribal Areas" now appears in the dropdown menu of area types. Users can then view drought data or maps for 323 tribal areas. As with other defined territories, information and maps of the tribal areas can be cross-referenced with data from more than 20 years of USDM maps. For example, the searchable tools allow you to quickly find the highest percentage of exceptional drought that's been recorded on the Wind River Reservation during the USDM's history (28.3% in January of 2003), graphs that show what percentage of the Navajo Nation is currently experiencing exceptional (D4) to extreme (D3) drought (95%, with 64% in D4) and much more.

Tribal areas are currently represented in the USDM's map archive, data tables and time series products. The USDM change maps, which provide a week-to-week picture of where conditions improved or grew worse, will soon be available by tribal areas as well.

Drought monitor data is used to determine eligibility to certain USDA drought assistance programs like the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#).

The Drought Monitor is produced jointly by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the USDA.

File Acreage Report by June 15 to Receive Premium Benefit for Cover Crops

Did you plant a cover crop and have crop insurance coverage for your spring crops this year? If so, you may be eligible for a premium benefit through the new Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP). To receive this benefit, you must file a cover crop Report of Acreage (FSA-578) by June 15, 2021.

We recognize cover crops require a sustained, long-term investment, and the economic challenges of the pandemic made it financially challenging for many producers to maintain cover crop systems. PCCP is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's financial assistance to help producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions.

This program helps ensure producers, including those here in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, can continue this important conservation practice.

How It Works

PCCP provides premium support to producers who insured their spring crop with most insurance policies and planted a qualifying cover crop during the 2021 crop year, which generally includes cover crops planted in late summer to fall of 2020. The premium support is \$5 per acre, but no more than the full premium owed.

Qualifying cover crops include all that are reportable to the Farm Service Agency (FSA), including cereals and other grasses, legumes, brassicas and other non-legume broadleaves, and mixtures of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time.

How to Receive Benefit

You will automatically receive the benefit if you file the cover crop Report of Acreage form (FSA-578) by June 15, 2021, with your local FSA office. To file the report, you should contact your local USDA Service Center and make an appointment.

This June 15, 2021, reporting date is distinct from the normal acreage reporting date. The normal acreage reporting deadline with FSA has not changed, but to receive the premium benefit, you must file by June 15.

More Information

If you want to learn more, feel free to contact Risk Management Agency's regional office in Valdosta, Georgia, at 229-242-7235; or you can visit farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance/cover-crops, where we have the Report of Acreage form that you need for FSA as well as frequently asked questions.

USDA Service Centers Provide Free, One-on-One Help for Farmers

At USDA, we are committed to helping farmers complete loan applications, environmental reviews, and other paperwork free of charge. One-on-one support is available at more than 2,300 USDA Service Centers nationwide. USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff are usually co-located at these Service Centers and can help guide farmers to the best USDA assistance based on their unique goals, whether it is loans, conservation programs, or insurance.

Service Center staff can guide farmers through the process of preparing and submitting required paperwork on their own, with no need to hire a paid preparer. Language translation service is available in all USDA Service Centers, so one-on-one assistance with a Service Center employee can be translated in real time for farmers requiring it. And while some program and loan applications do have an administrative fee for filing, there is never a charge for preparation services provided by USDA staff.

Farmers who work with the USDA Service Center can:

- Establish their farm by registering for a farm number, which is required for USDA programs and assistance.
- Learn how to meet conservation compliance provisions.
- Verify eligibility for USDA programs.
- Discuss their business and conservation goals.
- Create a conservation plan.
- Fill out and file loan and program applications.

We are committed to delivering USDA programs and services to America's farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to COVID-19. We encourage you to [check the status of your local USDA Service Center](#) and make an appointment to discuss your business needs.

USDA Announces Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

4 million in competitive grants is available to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov for planning and implementation projects until midnight July 30, 2021.

Planning Projects Planning projects initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. Projects may target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, urban agroforestry or food forests, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.

Implementation Projects Implementation projects that accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers. Projects will improve local food access and collaborate with partner organizations and may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, educational endeavors and urban farming policy implementation.

USDA Announces New Initiative to Quantify Climate Benefits of Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced an initiative to quantify the climate benefits of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts. This multi-year effort will enable USDA to better target CRP toward climate outcomes and improve existing models and conservation planning tools while supporting USDA's goal of putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change.

CRP Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation Projects

FSA has historically worked with partners to identify [Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation \(MAE\)](#) projects to quantify CRP environmental benefits to water quality and quantity, wildlife and rural economies. The agency will now invest \$10 million through this program to measure and monitor the soil carbon sequestration and other climate and environmental benefits of conservation practices over the life of CRP contracts.

This effort will allow USDA to better target climate outcomes through CRP while gaining critical data to calibrate, validate and further improve quantification methods within existing models and tools. One model of focus is the Daily Century Model, or DayCent, which simulates the movement of carbon and nitrogen through agricultural systems and informs the [National Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#). Data will also be used to strengthen the [COMET-Farm](#) and [COMET-Planner](#) tools, which enable producers to evaluate potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reductions based on specific management scenarios.

Request for Proposals

USDA is seeking proposals for projects to survey, sample and measure the climate benefits of land enrolled in the following CRP practice types over time:

- Predominately Perennial grass with legumes and shrubs, depending on the practice
- Tree
- Wetland, including both mineral and organic soils and both floodplain and non-floodplain wetlands

A project can cover one or more of the above practice types and should be for a three- to five-year term, with the potential for renewal. Projects should be a minimum of \$1 million and not exceed \$9 million.

Applications are welcome from all types of organizations, including public, private and nonprofit institutions. Project proposals can be from a single entity or from a group of partners who coordinate efforts. Applications from or in partnership with Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU), Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCU) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) or organizations will be considered as part of the selection process.

The deadline for proposals is July 2, 2021. Visit the [request for proposals](#) for more information on requirements, project deliverables, evaluation criteria and how to submit your proposal. Visit [FSA's Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation page](#) for additional information on CRP MAEs.

Conservation Reserve Program

CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with an established track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, reducing nitrogen runoff and providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, agricultural producers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Land is enrolled in CRP for 10 to 15 years, with the option of re-enrollment. [FSA offers multiple CRP signups](#), including the general signup and continuous signup – both currently open – as well as CRP Grasslands and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water.

In April, [USDA announced updates to CRP](#) including higher payment rates, new incentives for environmental practices and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. This included a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP general and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP practices include establishment of trees and permanent grasses, development of wildlife habitat and wetland restoration. [Download our "What's New" fact sheet](#) to learn more about program updates.

USDA Announces Cooperative Agreements for Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction

\$2 million in cooperative agreements is available for local governments to host Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) pilot projects. The cooperative agreements support projects that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans and they are part of USDA's broader efforts to support urban agriculture.

USDA Expands Aquaculture Disaster Assistance in Florida to Include Fish Raised for Food

In response to catastrophic aquaculture losses due to major winter storms that hit states along the U.S. Gulf Coast including Florida in February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced a policy change that makes food fish and other aquatic species eligible for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). Previously, only farm-raised game and bait fish were eligible for death loss ELAP benefits. Beginning June 1, eligible aquaculture producers can request ELAP assistance for 2021 losses. This policy change is for the 2021 and subsequent program years.

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary.

To be eligible, losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2021. For farm-raised fish and other aquatic species death losses only that occurred prior to June 1, 2021, FSA is waiving the requirement to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. An aquaculture producer will still need to be able to provide contemporaneous records upon request to document the eligible loss event and demonstrate the beginning and ending inventory. The deadline to file an application for payment for the 2021 program year is Jan. 31, 2022.

Producers must provide acreage reports for the surface acres of water where their aquatic species are raised. Acreage reports for 2021 must be filed by Sept. 30, 2022.

More Information

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. 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](#).

USDA Announces June 2021 Lending Rates for Agricultural Producers

USDA announced loan interest rates for June 2021, which are effective June 1. USDA's FSA loans provide important access to capital to help agricultural producers start or expand their farming operation, purchase equipment and storage structures, or meet cash flow needs.

FSA offers farm ownership and operating loans with favorable interest rates and terms to help eligible agricultural producers, whether multi-generational, long-time or new to the industry, obtain financing needed to start, expand or maintain a family agricultural operation. For many loan options, FSA sets aside funding for historically disadvantaged producers, including beginning, women, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic farmers and ranchers.

Interest rates for Operating and Ownership loans for June 2021 are as follows:

- [Farm Operating Loans](#) (Direct): 1.875%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Direct): 3.250%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Direct, Joint Financing): 2.500%
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#) (Down Payment): 1.500%
- [Emergency Loan](#) (Amount of Actual Loss): 2.875%

FSA also offers guaranteed loans through commercial lenders at rates set by those lenders. You can find out which of these loans may be right for you by using our [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#).

Commodity and Storage Facility Loans

Additionally, FSA provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade on-farm storage facilities and purchase handling equipment and loans that provide interim financing to help producers meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are low. Funds for these loans are provided through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and are administered by FSA.

- [Commodity Loans](#) (less than one year disbursed): 1.125%
- [Farm Storage Facility Loans](#):
 - Three-year loan terms: 0.375%
 - Five-year loan terms: 0.875%
 - Seven-year loan terms: 1.250%
 - Ten-year loan terms: 1.625%
 - Twelve-year loan terms: 1.750%
- [Sugar Storage Facility Loans](#) (15 years): 2.000%

Disaster Support

FSA also reminds rural communities, farmers and ranchers, families and small businesses affected by the year's winter storms, drought, and other natural disasters that USDA has programs that provide assistance. USDA staff in the regional, state and county offices are prepared with a variety of program flexibilities and other assistance to residents, agricultural producers and impacted communities. Many programs are available without an official disaster designation, including several risk management and disaster assistance options.

Pandemic Support

Through September 1, 2021, FSA's Disaster Set-Aside provision is available to direct loan borrowers who have been impacted by the pandemic. This enables an upcoming annual installment to be set aside for the year and added to the final installment. For annual operating loans, the loan maturity date may be extended up to twelve months in order to set aside the installment. This provision is normally used in the wake of natural disasters, and a second Disaster Set-Aside may be available for direct loan borrowers who already have a DSA in place on a loan due to another designated natural disaster.

Producers can explore available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting your [local USDA Service Center](#).

Applying for Beginning Farmer Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

For more information contact, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Dates to Remember

June 15 - File Acreage Report by June 15 to Receive Premium Benefit for Cover Crops

July 5 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

July 30 - Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production deadline

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).