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USDA to Provide Pandemic Assistance to Livestock Producers for Animal Losses

Livestock and poultry producers who suffered losses during the pandemic due to insufficient access to processing can apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Vilsack announced the Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP) in [recorded] remarks at the National Pork Industry Conference in Wisconsin Dells, WI. The announcement is part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Livestock and poultry producers can apply for assistance through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) July 20 through Sept. 17, 2021.



The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized payments to producers for losses of livestock or poultry depopulated from March 1, 2020 through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. PLIP payments will be based on 80% of the fair market value of the livestock and poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animal. Eligible livestock and poultry include swine, chickens and turkeys.

PLIP Program Details

Eligible livestock must have been depopulated from March 1, 2020, through December 26, 2020, due to insufficient processing access as a result of the pandemic. Livestock must have been physically located in the U.S. or a territory of the U.S. at the time of depopulation.

Eligible livestock owners include persons or legal entities who, as of the day the eligible livestock was depopulated, had legal ownership of the livestock. Packers, live poultry dealers and contract growers are not eligible for PLIP.

PLIP payments compensate participants for 80% of both the loss of the eligible livestock or poultry and for the cost of depopulation and disposal based on a single payment rate per head. PLIP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible livestock or poultry by the payment rate per head, and then subtracting the amount of any payments the eligible livestock or poultry owner has received for disposal of the livestock or poultry under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or a state program. The payments will also be reduced by any Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 1 and 2) payments paid on the same inventory of swine that were depopulated.

There is no per person or legal entity payment limitation on PLIP payments. To be eligible for payments, a person or legal entity must have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than \$900,000 for tax years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible livestock and poultry producers can apply for PLIP starting July 20, 2021, by completing the FSA-620, Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program application, and submitting it to any FSA county office. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/plip for a copy of the Notice of Funding Availability and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Livestock and poultry producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signups

Agricultural producers and landowners in Florida can apply for the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) Grasslands signup from today until August 20. This year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increased the program's conservation and climate benefits, including setting a minimum rental rate and identifying two national priority zones.

The CRP Grassland signup is competitive, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Grasslands Signup

CRP Grasslands helps Florida landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits.

FSA has updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of \$15 per acre, which will benefit 1,300 counties.

To focus on important wildlife corridors, FSA also identified [National Grassland Priority Zones](#), providing extra incentives to producers for enrolling grasslands in important migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas – the Greater Yellowstone Elk Migration Corridor and the Severe Wind Erosion – Dust Bowl Zone. Counties within these two zones get extra ranking points as well as \$5 added to their rental rate. The [CRP Grasslands Ranking Factors fact sheet](#) has additional information.

How to Sign Up

To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, producers and landowners should contact USDA by the August 20 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Contact your [Service Center](#) to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

More Information on CRP

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary this past December.

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USDA Expands and Renews Conservation Reserve Program in Effort to Boost Enrollment and Address Climate Change

USDA will open enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with higher payment rates, new incentives, and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. Additionally, USDA is announcing investments in partnerships to increase climate-smart agriculture, including \$330 million in 85 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects and \$25 million for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials.

Conservation Reserve Program

USDA's goal is to enroll up to 4 million new acres in CRP by raising rental payment rates and expanding the number of incentivized environmental practices allowed under the program. CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with a long track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, and reducing nitrogen runoff, as well providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

CRP is a powerful tool when it comes to climate mitigation, and acres currently enrolled in the program mitigate more than 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). If USDA reaches its goal of enrolling an additional 4 million acres into the program, it will mitigate an additional 3 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent and prevent

90 million pounds of nitrogen and 33 million tons of sediment from running into our waterways each year.

New Climate-Smart Practice Incentive

To target the program on climate change mitigation, FSA is introducing 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. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is annual, and the amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.

Higher Rental Rates and New Incentives

In 2021, CRP is capped at 25 million acres, and currently 20.8 million acres are enrolled. Furthermore, the cap will gradually increase to 27 million acres by 2023. To help increase producer interest and enrollment, FSA is:

- **Adjusting soil rental rates.** This enables additional flexibility for rate adjustments, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increasing payments for Practice Incentives from 20% to 50%.** This incentive for continuous CRP practices is based on the cost of establishment and is in addition to cost share payments.
- **Increasing payments for water quality practices.** Rates are increasing 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 CRP Grassland minimum rental rate.** This benefits more than 1,300 counties with rates currently below the minimum.

To learn more about updates to CRP, download our “What’s New with CRP” [fact sheet](#).

Manage Your USDA Business Online, Conservation Client Gateway Retiring

You can now manage your conservation activities and request assistance from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) by logging into your [farmers.gov](#) account. These conservation features join several others already available through the [farmers.gov portal](#), including the ability to view farm loan information. As more content and capabilities are added, [farmers.gov](#) is quickly becoming the online hub for producers to find resources, submit applications, and request assistance.

Previously, self-service conservation activities were available through Conservation Client Gateway, but that portal was retired on Oct. 15.

But those functionalities are now available through [farmers.gov](#). It was designed and built with the valuable input of USDA customers like you and ready to use for your conservation needs.

Through [farmers.gov](#), you can:

- View, upload, download and e-sign documents;
- Request conservation assistance;

- Request financial assistance, including submitting a program application;
- View and request application details;
- Reference technical terms and submit questions;
- Access information on current and past conservation practices;
- Report practice completion and request practice certification;
- View detailed information on all previous and ongoing contracts, including the amount of cost share assistance received and anticipated; and
- Have authority for FSA and NRCS customers to work in the portal and act on behalf of their active power-of-attorney entitlements and their current authorities for business entities.

Current Conservation Client Gateway Users

If you are a current Conservation Client Gateway user, your information and data will continue to be available through farmers.gov. To access your information, visit farmers.gov and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the [“Sign In / Sign Up” link](#) at the top right of the website. You'll sign in using your existing CCG account login information.

New Farmers.gov Users

If you do not have login information for farmers.gov, you can create your login profile, or eAuthentication by following the instructions at farmers.gov/sign-in

Help and Support

The [Conservation Features User Guide](#) gives you step-by-step instructions on how to navigate farmers.gov and the [how-to video instructions](#) explain some of the popular features. If you need additional help, personal assistance is available at the farmers.gov Service Desk by selecting the “Help” link located at the top of the all authenticated portal pages and submitting a “Contact Us” request. NRCS field office staff are always available to assist you with your conservation questions and other needs.

New Farmers.gov Conservation Concerns Tool Provides Customized Support for America’s Farmers and Ranchers

Are you interested in keeping your working land productive for years to come? Use Natural Resources Conservation Service’s new [Conservation Concerns Tool](#) to learn about conservation concerns that might impact your agricultural operation, then work with us on solutions targeted to fit your business needs. This tool is available now on our farmers.gov website, no login or account necessary.

With plain language and illustrative photos, the Conservation Concerns Tool provides a walkthrough of more than 40 conservation concerns related to soil, water, plants, animals, energy and air. Use the tool to create a list of resource concerns specific to your farm, ranch, or working forest lands, then download or print your list to share with NRCS staff at your [local USDA Service Center](#).

We have a [video available to walk you through the tool](#) so you can see how it works.

The Conservation Concerns Tool is built to run on any modern browser such as Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or Safari and is fully functional on mobile devices. Whether you work from

your desktop at home or your smartphone in the field, this new tool offers personalized conservation insights to meet the needs of 21st century agriculture.

Visit farmers.gov/conserve to learn about additional USDA resources available for your working land.

USDA Announces Updated Conservation Practice Standards

USDA has completed and published updates to its set of [National Conservation Practice Standards](#), which include 58 standards that have been updated or revised since August. The 2018 Farm Bill required USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to review all 169 of its national conservation practices to seek opportunities to increase flexibility and incorporate new technologies.

NRCS's National Conservation Practice Standards provides guidelines for planning, designing, installing, operating and maintaining conservation practices. The 58 revised standards cover a wide range of practices, including irrigation water management, heavy use area protection, and composting facilities.

During the review process, NRCS is adding two new conservation practices dealing with wastewater treatment and wildlife habitat planning, along with maintaining an additional 18 interim conservation practice standards that are being tested to establish and document natural resource benefits.

These updated practices include changes in technology and add criteria to address emerging concerns such as soil health, water conservation, drought tolerance, and resiliency. They contribute to the USDA [Agriculture Innovation Agenda](#)'s goal of reducing the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture in half by 2050.

For more information on the National Conservation Practice Standards, visit nrcs.usda.gov or contact your [local NRCS field office](#). To learn about the benefits of conservation practices directly from the farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners applying them, check out the [Conservation at Work](#) video series.

Fresh Market Sweet Corn, Fresh Market Tomato, and Pepper Growers Need to Make Insurance Decisions Soon

The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida fresh market sweet corn, fresh market tomato, and pepper growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2022 crop year is July 31. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the July 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 sweet corn in Broward, De Soto, Glades, Hendry, Indian River, Lake, Martin, Miami-Dade, Orange, Palm Beach, and Suwannee counties.

Coverage is also available for fresh market tomatoes in Broward, Charlotte, Collier, De Soto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Polk, Sarasota, and St. Lucie counties.

Coverage is available for peppers in Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Martin, Palm Beach, Sarasota, and St. Lucie counties.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2022 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.

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.

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans Available

Small nonfarm businesses in Florida may be eligible to apply for low-interest federal disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration. By law, SBA makes Economic Injury Disaster Loans available when the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture designates an agricultural disaster.

SBA eligibility covers both the economic impacts on businesses dependent on farmers and ranchers that have suffered agricultural production losses caused by the disaster and businesses directly impacted by the disaster.

Small nonfarm businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and most private nonprofit organizations of any size may qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans of up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses which could have been met had the disaster not occurred.

Eligibility for these loans is based on the financial impact of the disaster only and not on any actual property damage. These loans have an interest rate of 3 percent for businesses and 2 percent for private nonprofit organizations, a maximum term of 30 years and are available to small businesses and most private nonprofits without the financial ability to offset the adverse impact without hardship.

Businesses primarily engaged in farming or ranching are not eligible for SBA disaster assistance. Agricultural enterprises should contact the Farm Services Agency about the U.S. Department of Agriculture assistance made available by the Secretary's declaration. However, nurseries are eligible for SBA disaster assistance in drought disasters.

Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance.

Dates to Remember

July 16 - Proposals due for [Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction](#) pilot projects for fiscal year 2021.

July 23 - [CRP General Signup](#)

July 30 - Proposals due for [urban agriculture and production projects](#).

July 31 - Deadline to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2022 crop of Florida fresh market sweet corn, fresh market tomato, and pepper.

August 20 - Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signups Deadline

Sept. 1 - Applications due for [Environmental Quality Incentive Program](#).

Sept. 30 - [Applications due for financial assistance](#) to improve water quality in [Long Pond Slough watershed](#).



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