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USDA Invests \$4.7 Million to Provide Outreach and Technical Assistance to Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced an investment of \$4.7 million to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers. The partnerships will support participation in Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, including those that are part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative.



Fifty-six project proposals, covering all states and territories, are being finalized to assist historically underserved farmers and ranchers in accessing FSA programs. Programs include outreach for pandemic assistance programs, including the signup re-opening of the [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2](#) (CFAP 2). These proposals will also assist in outreach for FSA's farm programs, [conservation programs](#), [farm loans](#), [county committee elections](#), [disaster programs](#), the [Heirs' Property Relending Program](#), heirs' property succession planning and the Agricultural Marketing Service's [Pandemic Response and Safety Grant](#) program.

The organizations and projects impacting Florida include:

- National Young Farmers Coalition, Inc. providing support on CFAP2 statewide

- Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA providing support on CFAP2 statewide
- Center for Community & Economic Development Inc. providing support on CFAP2 and all FSA programs in North Florida counties
- Florida National Women in Ag. Association, Inc. providing support on CFAP2 and all FSA programs in Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Broward, Marion, and Osceola counties
- North South Institute, Inc. providing support on CFAP2, New Farm Enrollment, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), Receipt for Service (RFS), Microloans, Ownership Loans (OL), and Farm Operating Loans (FO) in thirty-seven (37) counties in seven (7) clusters and their correlating USDA local service centers:
 - Cluster 1: Miami-Dade, Broward
 - Cluster 2: Palm Beach, Glades, Hendry, Collier, Hardee, De Soto, Highlands
 - Cluster 3: St. Lucie, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Brevard, Volusia
 - Cluster 4: Polk, Sumter, Osceola, Seminole, Orange, Lake
 - Cluster 5: Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough, Pasco
 - Cluster 6: Marion, Alachua, Gilchrist, Levy
 - Cluster 7: Jackson, Holmes, Gadsden, Madison, Leon, Jefferson

Read about all 56 funded projects and organizations on [FSA's cooperative agreements webpage](#).

Application Period Opens for Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a [Request for Applications](#) (RFA) for the new Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant program and encourages eligible entities to apply now for funds. Applications must be submitted electronically through the grant portal at <https://usda-prs.grantsolutions.gov/usda> by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, November 22, 2021. Approximately \$650 million in funding is available for the PRS grants, which are funded by the Pandemic Assistance provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

The PRS Grant program will assist small businesses in certain commodity areas, including specialty crop producers, shellfish farming, finfish farming, aquaculture, and apiculture; specialty crop, meat, and other processors; distributors; and farmers markets. Small businesses and nonprofits in these industries can apply for a grant to cover COVID-related expenses such as workplace safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment (PPE), retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety, shifting to online sales platforms, transportation, worker housing, and medical costs. The minimum funding request is \$1,500 and the maximum funding request is \$20,000.

The [RFA](#) and the [PRS Grant Portal](#) provide more details about eligibility for the grant. Eligible entities are required to obtain a free DUNS Number from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) BEFORE applying for this program. USDA has created a custom PRS DUNS number portal at <https://support.dnb.com/PandemicResponse>.

Application resources including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), tip sheets in English and Spanish on applying for a DUNS Number, videos on “How to Apply” and more are available on the [PRS Grant Portal](#).

For more information, you can also reach out to the PRS help desk, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. ET at (301) 238-5550 or usda.ams.prs@grantsolutions.gov.

Check your eligibility, obtain a DUNS number, and learn more about the application process at the [PRS Grant Portal](#).

USDA Unveils New Climate Partnership Initiative, Requests Public Input

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to partnering with agriculture, forestry and rural communities to develop climate solutions that strengthen rural America. The Department has outlined and requested public comments on a new climate partnership initiative designed to create new revenue streams for producers via market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices.

Guided by science, USDA will support a set of pilot projects that provide incentives to implement climate-smart conservation practices on working lands and to quantify and monitor the carbon and greenhouse gas benefits associated with those practices. The Department published a Request for Information (RFI) seeking public comment and input on design of the new initiative. Stakeholders interested in providing comments may do so on or before 11:59 p.m. EST on November 1, 2021, via the [Federal Register, Docket ID: USDA-2021-0010](#).

USDA Launches First Phase of Soil Carbon Monitoring Efforts through CRP



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$10 million in a new initiative to sample, measure, and monitor soil carbon on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to better quantify the climate outcomes of the program. CRP is an important tool in the Nation's fight to reduce the worst impacts of climate change facing our farmers, ranchers, and foresters. This initiative will begin implementation in fall 2021 with three partners. Today's announcement is part of a broader, long-term soil carbon monitoring effort across agricultural lands that supports USDA's commitment to deliver climate solutions to

agricultural producers and rural America through voluntary, incentive-based solutions.

These models include 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.

USDA partners will conduct soil carbon sampling on three categories of CRP practice types: perennial grass, trees, and wetlands.

Perennial grasses: In consultation with USDA, Michigan State University will sample and measure soil carbon and bulk density of CRP grasslands (including native grass plantings, rangelands, and pollinator habitat plantings) at an estimated 600 sites across the U.S. with a focus in the central states during this five-year project. This information will be used to model and compare the climate benefits of CRP. Partners include the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Deveron, an agriculture technology company, and Woods End Laboratories.

Trees: Mississippi State University will partner with Alabama A&M University to collect above and below ground data at 162 sites across seven states documenting CRP-related benefits to soil and atmospheric carbon levels. Information will help further calibrate the DayCent model. This five-year project will focus within the Mississippi Delta and Southeast states.

Wetlands: Ducks Unlimited and its partners will collect data on carbon stocks in wetland soils as well as vegetation carbon levels at 250 wetland sites across a 15-state area in the central U.S. Data will support the DayCent and additional modeling. Partners for this five-year project include: Migratory Bird Joint Venture, Intertribal Research and Resource Center at United Tribes Technical College, Clemson University, Kenyon

College, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Missouri, and the University of Texas at Austin.

CRP Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation Projects

These three Climate Change Mitigation Assessment Initiative projects are funded through FSA's program to work with partners to identify [Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation \(MAE\)](#) projects to quantify CRP environmental benefits to water quality and quantity, wildlife, and rural economies.

Applications for projects were welcome from all organizations, including public, private, nonprofit institutions, and educational institutions including historically Black colleges and universities, Tribal colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions or organizations.

For more details on the all the awarded MAE projects, visit the [FSA Monitoring Assessment & Evaluation webpage](#).

About the 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. In general, 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, as well as Grassland CRP and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water. In 2021, producers and landowners enrolled more than 5.3 million acres in CRP signups, surpassing USDA's 4-million-acre goal.

Earlier this year, [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 the ["What's New" fact sheet](#) to learn more about CRP updates.

More Information

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation's lands, biodiversity, and natural resources including our soil, air, and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local, and Tribal governments.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and other producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

USDA Offers Online Tool for Drought-Stricken Ranchers to Estimate Compensation for Feed Transportation Costs

An online tool is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed transportation costs caused by drought, which are now covered by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated the

program this year to include feed transportation costs as well as lowered the threshold for when assistance for water hauling expenses is available. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin taking applications this fall.

The new [ELAP Feed Transportation Producer Tool](#) is a Microsoft Excel workbook that enables ranchers to input information specific to their operation to determine an estimated payment. Final payments may vary depending on eligibility.

To use the tool, ranchers will need:

- Number of truckloads for this year.
- Mileage per truckload this year.
- Share of feed cost this year (if splitting loads).
- Number of truckloads you normally haul.
- Normal mileage per truckload.
- Share of normal feed cost

The tool requires Microsoft Excel, and a [tutorial video](#) is available.

Updates to ELAP

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 as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. ELAP now covers feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#); or

Drought intensity is D3 or greater.

The tool calculates the estimated payment for feed transportation assistance, but it is not an application. Once FSA begins accepting applications later this fall for feed transportation assistance, ranchers should contact their FSA county office to apply. To simplify the application process, ranchers can print or email payment estimates generated by this tool for submission to FSA. The deadline to apply for ELAP, including feed transportation costs, for 2021 is Jan. 31, 2022.

ELAP already covers above normal costs for hauling water to livestock in areas where drought intensity is D3 or greater on the drought monitor. FSA is also updating ELAP to also cover water hauling in areas experiencing D2 for eight consecutive weeks, lowering the threshold for this assistance to be available. Program benefits are retroactive for 2021.

Payment Calculations

USDA will reimburse eligible ranchers 60% of feed transportation costs above what would have been incurred in a normal year. Producers qualifying as underserved (socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or military veteran) will be reimbursed for 90% of the feed transportation cost above what would have been incurred in a normal year.

USDA uses a national cost formula to determine reimbursement costs that will not include the first 25 miles and distances exceeding 1,000 transportation miles. The calculation will also exclude the normal cost to transport hay or feed if the producer normally purchases some feed. For 2021, the initial cost formula of \$6.60 per mile will be used (before the percentage is applied).

Eligibility

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to

FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee.

More Drought Recovery Information

USDA has taken additional steps to assist drought-impacted producers, including:

- [Extending deadlines for crop insurance premium and administrative fees, and deferring interest accrual.](#)
- [Streamlining and accelerating losses and issuance of indemnity payments for crop insurance.](#)
- [Investing \\$41.8 million through a four-state pilot of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts focused on drought practices.](#)
- [Investing \\$15 million through a block grant to the Klamath Drought Response Agency to provide payments to producers to reduce irrigation demand.](#)

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-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 details, producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Expands Local, Electronic Communication Options for Producers

USDA is expanding our online communications platform that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has used for years to now include local information from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and other USDA agencies.

Subscribers will now receive important information on FSA, NRCS and RMA programs, eligibility requirements, deadlines, and more.

You're currently subscribed to the Florida State Office newsletter and updates. News will continue to be sent via e-mail right to your home or farm office, or to your smartphone – allowing you to receive immediate notification of USDA news that applies to your agricultural operation.

You can also subscribe to text alerts from the State Office USDA Service Center by texting Florida to 372-669. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Fill the Feed and Feed the World for #Harvest2021

Fall on the farm presents us with a symphony of sounds: tractor and combine engines turning, machines whirring, grain falling into siloes, birdsong in the morning, and insects chirping in the evening.

As America's farmers harvest the crops that feed, clothe, and fuel our world, let's fill the @FarmersGov 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 #Plant2021 campaign in the spring.

To share your experience on @FarmersGov social media and our [national storymap](#), follow these steps:

- Collect photos or a video depicting what's happening on your operation as you harvest. Show us those crops!
- 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, 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.

NASS to send 2021 Hemp Acreage and Production Survey This Fall

This October, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will mail its first **Hemp Acreage and Production Survey**. The survey will collect information on the total planted and harvested area, yield, production, and value of hemp in the United States.

The Domestic Hemp Production Program established in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) allows for the cultivation of hemp under certain conditions. The Hemp Acreage and Production survey will provide needed data about the hemp industry to assist producers, regulatory agencies, state governments, processors, and other key industry entities.

Producers may complete the survey online at agcounts.usda.gov or they may complete and return the survey by mail using the return envelope provided.

Learn more about the survey at nass.usda.gov/go/hemp.

Higher Loan Limit Now Available for USDA Guaranteed Farm Loans

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a higher loan limit will be available for borrowers seeking a guaranteed farm loan starting Oct. 1, 2021, from \$1.776 million to \$1.825 million.

FSA farm loans offer access to funding for a wide range of producer needs, from securing land to financing the purchase of equipment. Guaranteed loans are financed and serviced by commercial lenders. FSA provides up to a 95% guarantee against possible financial loss of principal and interest. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

In fiscal year 2021, FSA saw continued strong demand for guaranteed loans. FSA obligated more than \$3.4 billion in guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans. This includes nearly \$1.2 billion for beginning farmers. The number of guaranteed borrowers has grown by 10% to more than 38,750 farmers and ranchers over the last decade. FSA expects the increasing demand for farm loans to continue into fiscal year 2022.

Disaster Set-Aside Extension

USDA has additional support available to producers given the recent outbreaks of the COVID-19 Delta variant and has extended the availability of COVID-19 Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) for installments due through Jan. 31, 2022. In addition, FSA will permit a second DSA for COVID-19 and a second DSA for natural disasters for those who had an initial COVID-19 DSA. Requests for a COVID-19 DSA or a second DSA must be received no later than May 1, 2022.

Last year, FSA broadened the use of the DSA. Normally used in the wake of natural disasters, the DSA can now allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19 and determined to be eligible, to have their next payment set aside. The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This will improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

More Information

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

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2021 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 1, 2021, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 6, 2021.

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 participate or cooperate in an FSA program. A person who is not of legal voting age but supervises and conducts the farming operations of an entire farm, may also be eligible to vote. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received FSA program benefits.

Eligible voters in the local administrative areas who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local USDA Service Center.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2022.

More information on county committees, such as the new 2021 fact sheet, can be found on the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov/elections or at a local USDA Service Center.

Dates to Remember

November 1 - County Committee elections begin

November 11 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

November 22 - Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grant Program deadline

November 25 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

Selected Interest Rates for October 2021

Farm Operating - Direct	1.750%
Farm Operating - Microloan	1.750%
Farm Ownership - Direct	2.875%
Farm Ownership - Microloan	2.875%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency Loan - Amount of Actual Loss	2.750%



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