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USDA Announces Inaugural Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack selected 12 members to serve on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) inaugural Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture to provide input on policy development and to help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

The new Secretary's Advisory Committee is part of USDA's efforts to support urban agriculture, creating a network for feedback. Urban agriculture plays an important role in producing fresh, healthy food in areas where grocery stores are scarce, and also provides jobs and beautifies neighborhoods.

Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture

The Committee is made up of agricultural producers, and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing. Members include:

- **Jerry Ann Hebron**, Mich., Urban Producer
- **Bobby Wilson**, Ga., Urban Producer
- **Viraj Puri**, N.Y., Innovative Producer
- **Kaben Smallwood**, Okla., Innovative Producer
- **Sally Brown**, Wash., Higher Education

- **John Erwin**, Md., Higher Education
- **Carl Wallace**, Ohio, Non-Profit Representative
- **John Lebeaux**, Mass., Business and Economic Development Representative
- **Zachari Curtis**, D.C., Supply Chain Experience
- **Allison Paap**, Calif., Financing Entity Representative
- **Tara Chadwick**, Fla., Related Experience
- **Angela Mason**, Ill., Related Experience

USDA and the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production peer reviewed more than 300 nominees, and Vilsack made the final selections. Selections ensured geographic, racial and gender diversity and a broad range of agricultural experience. The new members will serve terms of one to three years.

The first meeting of this inaugural committee, which will be open to the public, will take place in late February. More details will be available in the *Federal Register* and at farmers.gov/urban and the new [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture website](#).

USDA and Urban Agriculture

The advisory committee and county committees are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Grants that target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.
- Cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing \$260,000 for risk management training and crop insurance education for historically underserved and urban producers through partnerships between USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#)(RMA) and the University of Maryland, University of Connecticut, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems.
- Providing technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)(NRCS).
- Organizing 11 [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) urban and suburban county committees. FSA will organize additional committees.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by 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 at farmers.gov/urban and the new [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture website](#).

Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include grants from USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) and [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) as well as [FSA loans](#).

What's New and Improved for Specialty Crop Producers?

Does your operation include specialty crops? Whether you grow fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, or nursery crops - USDA is here for you.

Over the past year, USDA has stepped up our support of specialty crop producers and local and regional food systems. USDA believes specialty crop producers are integral to the food system of the future, and we are working to improve available options for specialty crop producers as well as ensure equity in program delivery.

What's New?

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) rolled out a new insurance option for small-scale producers who sell locally, which is named **Micro Farm**. This new insurance coverage option simplifies record keeping and covers post-production costs, such as washing and value-added products. It is available now, and you can learn more from an Approved Insurance Provider or your [RMA specialty crop liaison](#).

In addition to Micro Farm, RMA rolled out other new insurance options in the past year, including: **California Citrus Trees, Florida Citrus, Production and Revenue History option for Florida strawberries, and Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index (HIP-WI)**. These new options either fill gaps in coverage or offer advantages over other policies. Since 2020, producers weathered several major hurricanes. The new HIP-WI played a crucial role in recovery with more than \$250 million in indemnities paid so far with most payments issued in a matter of weeks following a hurricane.

[Interest in growing and insuring specialty crops](#) has grown significantly with \$1 billion in liabilities for 1990 to \$22 billion in liabilities for 2021. ([For more details, check out reports on our Specialty Crops webpage.](#))

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) also offered pandemic assistance for organic producers. The new [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program](#) (OTECP) provided assistance to help cover loss of markets, increased costs, labor shortages and expenses related to obtaining or renewing their organic certification.

What's Improved?

In the past year, RMA made improvements to existing policies -- including [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#), a key insurance option for specialty crop producers. Beginning in the 2021 crop year, direct market producers could report two or more commodities using a new combined direct marketing code.

This reduced a tremendous burden for diversified producers and allowed them to receive a premium rate discount for diversification. For 2022, RMA increased coverage for organic and aquaculture producers and enabled organic producers to report certified organic acreage as long as the request for certification had been made by the reporting date, which provides additional flexibility to producers.

Want to Learn More?

These new and improved options for specialty crop producers are but a few of USDA's strides over the past year to build a fairer, more transparent food system rooted in local and regional production. To learn more, please read [USDA's January 19, 2022, news release](#).

For crop insurance, visit [RMA's Specialty Crops webpage](#) or [contact your specialty crop liaison](#).

Also, if there is not a standard offer for the crop you would like insured, you may still be able to get a written agreement for coverage. RMA Regional Offices review these requests to help provide coverage. These requests also provide Regional Offices the opportunity to review the possible expansion of the policy to your county.

Lastly, you can read our [Specialty Crops webpage on farmers.gov](#) and [question-and-answer with two specialty crop liaisons](#), Adrienne Steinacher and Matt Wilkin.

Crop Insurance Deadline Nears in Florida for Spring Planted Crops and Whole-Farm Revenue Protection



The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida corn, cotton, cucumbers, flue-cured tobacco, grain sorghum, peanut, and soybean growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2022 crop year is February 28. Growers who are interested in the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) policy and are calendar year or early fiscal year filers, have until February 28 to apply for crop insurance. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the February 28 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 corn, cotton, peanuts, soybeans, and WFRP in select Florida counties. Coverage is available for cucumbers in Jackson County. Coverage is also available for flue-cured tobacco in Alachua, Columbia, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, and Suwannee counties. Coverage is available for grain sorghum in Calhoun, Escambia, Jackson, Jefferson, and Levy counties. Please contact your insurance agent to see if your county is covered.

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. Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at www.rma.usda.gov.

Waiver of DCIA Compliance for Commodity and Farm Storage Facility Loan Programs

On January 27, 2021, the Biden-Harris Administration suspended all debt collections, foreclosures, and other adverse actions for borrowers of direct farm loans and Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) because of the national public health emergency caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

It has been determined that the January 2021 suspension included a waiver of the Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) noncompliance for issuing new Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL), Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) or FSFL to borrowers who are in delinquent status with FSFL or farm loans.

Under normal circumstances, DCIA specifies that a person cannot obtain Federal financial assistance in the form of loans (other than disaster loans), loan insurance, or guarantees if that person has delinquent Federal non-tax debt. MAL, LDP, and FSFL programs administered by FSA are currently subject to these statutory constraints.

FSA county offices will review MALs, LDPs, and FSFLs that were previously denied on or after January 27, 2021, because of DCIA noncompliance. Offices will notify applicants of the waiver provisions and the

opportunity to obtain a loan. All applicable eligibility requirements remain in place with the exception of DCIA waiver.

Reach out to your local FSA office for more information. To find your local office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new program to assist hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale during the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications Dec. 15, 2021 through Feb. 25, 2022.

SMHPP provides assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020. Negotiated sale, or negotiated formula sale, means a sale of hogs by a producer to a packer under which the base price for the hogs is determined by seller-buyer interaction and agreement on a delivery day. USDA is offering SMHPP as packer production was reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic due to employee illness and supply chain issues, resulting in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices.

The Department has set aside up to \$50 million in pandemic assistance funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for SMHPP.

SMHPP Program Details

Eligible hogs include hogs sold through a negotiated sale by producers between April 16, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020. To be eligible, the producer must be a person or legal entity who has ownership in the hogs and whose production facilities are located in the United States, including U.S. territories. Contract producers, federal, state and local governments, including public schools and packers are not eligible for SMHPP.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. FSA will issue payments to eligible hog producers as applications are received and approved.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP starting Dec. 15, 2021, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/smhpp for a copy of the Notice of Funds Availability, information on applicant eligibility 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. Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Applying for NAP Payments

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 "Application for Coverage" and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment" within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local county office or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options

There are options for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about your options.

2022 FAMU AgDiscovery Summer Youth Program Opportunity

June 12-25, 2022

FAMU AgDiscovery is an opportunity for rising 9th-12th graders to explore agricultural sciences and learn about careers in animal-related disciplines, including veterinary medicine.

Students will gain experiential learning through workshops, laboratory and field exercises, field trips, and various cultural and teambuilding activities.

The program:

- is USDA-funded and **free** to participating students
- includes on-campus housing for program participants
- helps students to explore career paths and apply for early admission to FAMU

Application Deadline: March 31, 2022

To apply or for more information, visit: www.aphis.usda.gov/agdiscovery or contact:

Carmen Lyttle-N'guessan, Ph.D.: 850-412-5363

Glen Wright, DVM: 850-599-8433

Cooperative Extension Program: 850-599-3546



Dates to Remember

Feb 21 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

Feb 25 - Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) application deadline

Mar 11 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – General Signup ends

Mar 15 - Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs election and enrollment ends

Mar 25 - Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage (SDMC) enrollment ends

Selected Interest Rates for February 2022

Farm Operating - Direct	2.250%
Farm Operating - Microloan	2.250%
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	3.250%



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