



## In This Issue:

- [USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters](#)
- [USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online](#)
- [USDA Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers](#)
- [Weather the Storm: FEMA Mobile App Provides Weather Alerts and Safety Tips](#)
- [Submitting Production Losses for Disaster Declarations](#)
- [Keeping Livestock Inventory Records](#)
- [USDA to Triple Commitment with Initial \\$2.8 Billion Investment, with Additional Projects to Come](#)
- [NRCS Announces Conservation Funding Opportunities for 2022](#)
- [USDA Opens People's Garden Initiative to Gardens Nationwide](#)
- [Applying for Youth Loans](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [Selected Interest Rates for September 2022](#)

---

## USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced another installment (phase) in assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021. More than 18,000 producers will soon receive new or updated pre-filled disaster applications to offset eligible crop losses. Approximately \$6.4 billion has already been distributed to 165,000 producers through USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

FSA will begin mailing pre-filled applications in late August to producers who have potentially eligible losses and:

- Received crop insurance indemnities for qualifying 2020 and 2021 disaster events after May 2, 2022.
- Received crop insurance indemnities associated with Nursery, Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) and Margin Protection (MP) policies.
- New primary policyholders not included in the initial insured producer Phase 1 mailing from May 25, 2022, because their claim records had not been filled.
- Certain 2020 prevent plant losses related to qualifying 2020 disaster events that had only been recorded in crop insurance records as related to 2019 adverse weather events and, as such, were not previously provided in applications sent earlier this year.
- New Substantial Beneficial Interest (SBI) records, including SBIs where tax identification numbers were corrected.
- Producers are expected to receive assistance direct deposited into their bank account within three business days after they sign and return the pre-filled application to the FSA county office and the county office enters the application into the system.

Before applying any program payment factors or eligibility criteria, it is estimated that this next installment (phase) may generate about \$756 million in assistance.

### **Emergency Relief Payments to Date**

This emergency relief under ERP complements ERP assistance recently provided to more than 165,000 producers who had received crop insurance indemnities and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments for qualifying losses. USDA has processed more than 255,000 applications for ERP, and to date, has made approximately \$6.4 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

### **Phase Two**

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP will be aimed at filling gaps and provide assistance to producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing risk management programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

### **More Information**

In addition, on Aug. 18, 2022, USDA published a technical correction to the [Notice of Funds Availability](#) for ERP and ELRP to clarify how income from the sale of farm equipment and the provision of production inputs and services to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and farm operations are to be considered in the calculation of average adjusted gross farm income. Producers whose average adjusted gross farm income is at least 75% of the producer's the average Adjusted Gross Income can gain access to a higher payment limitation.

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are authorized by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires,

droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit [FSA's Emergency Relief webpage](#). A [new public-facing dashboard](#) on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty– specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard every Monday.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

---

## USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA's Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.



OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer's personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](#) to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing and sharing documents through

these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit [farmers.gov/mydocs](https://farmers.gov/mydocs) to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

To learn more about program flexibilities and Service Center status during the coronavirus pandemic, visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus).

---

## USDA Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023. USDA's new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty

crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements, which is part of USDA's broader effort to transform the food system to create a more level playing field for small and medium producers and a more balanced, equitable economy for everyone working in food and agriculture.

Specialty crop operations can apply for assistance for eligible expenses related to a 2022 food safety certificate issued on or after June 21, 2022, beginning June 27, 2022. USDA is delivering FSCSC to provide critical assistance for specialty crop operations, with an emphasis on equity in program delivery while building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions. Vilsack made the announcement from Hollis, N.H., where he toured a local, family-owned farm and highlighted USDA's efforts to help reduce costs for farmers and support local economies by providing significant funding to cut regulatory costs and increase market opportunities for farmers in New Hampshire and across the nation.

### Program Details

FSCSC will assist specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023. For each year, FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing their certification, as well as a portion of their related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2022 (issued on or after June 21, 2022) or 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.

- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety).

### Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2022 is June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date. FSA will issue payments at the time of application approval for 2022 and after the application period ends for 2023. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Producers can visit [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety) for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

## Weather the Storm: FEMA Mobile App Provides Weather Alerts and Safety Tips

*USDA offers programs to help producers recover from disasters; FEMA can help you prepare ahead of time.*

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a free mobile app that explains what to do before, during and after emergencies. The app is available for download for Apple, Android and Blackberry mobile devices.

Download the app to:

- Receive alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations
- Get safety reminders, read tips to survive natural disasters and customize your emergency checklist
- Locate open shelters and where to talk to FEMA in person (or on the phone)
- Upload and share your disaster photos to help first responders.



For more information about the FEMA app, visit [fema.gov/mobile-app](https://fema.gov/mobile-app). To download the FEMA app from the Apple Store visit [itunes.apple.com/us/app/fema/id474807486?mt=8](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fema/id474807486?mt=8). To

download the FEMA app on Google Play for Android  
visit: [play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.fema.mobile.android&hl=en](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.fema.mobile.android&hl=en)

---

## Submitting Production Losses for Disaster Declarations



Farmers and ranchers know all too well that natural disasters can be a common, and likely a costly, variable to their operation. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has emergency assistance programs to provide assistance when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger. When a natural disaster occurs, there is a process for requesting a USDA Secretarial disaster designation for a county. You can play a vital role in this process.

If you have experienced a production loss as a result of a natural disaster, you may submit a request to your local FSA county office for your county to be evaluated for a Secretarial disaster designation. Once a request is received, the county office will collect disaster data and create a Loss Assessment Report. The County Emergency Board will review the Loss Assessment Report and determine if a recommendation is sent forward to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for the designation.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/disaster](https://fsa.usda.gov/disaster).

---

## Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.



You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

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

---

## USDA to Triple Commitment with Initial \$2.8 Billion Investment, with Additional Projects to Come



### *Biden-Harris Administration Announces Historic Investment in Partnerships for 70 Climate-Smart Commodities and Rural Projects*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the Biden-Harris Administration through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year. Ultimately, USDA's anticipated investment will triple to more than \$3 billion in pilots that will create market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart production practices. These initial projects will expand markets for climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Applicants submitted more than 450 project proposals in this first funding pool, and the strength of the projects identified led USDA to increase its investment in this opportunity from the initial \$1 billion Vilsack announced earlier this year.

---

## NRCS Announces Conservation Funding Opportunities for 2022

USDA has several fiscal year 2022 assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and private landowners for key programs, such as the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP), [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) and [Agricultural Management Assistance](#) (AMA) program.



Through conservation programs, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

### **Applying for Assistance**

NRCS accepts applications for its conservation programs year-round. State Technical Committees, composed of representatives from conservation and agricultural-related organizations, work with NRCS to set state-specific, ranking dates to evaluate applications for funding. These dates account for producer needs, staff workload and ensure potential

participants have ample opportunity to apply. Producers should apply by their state's ranking dates to be considered for funding in the current cycle.

Funding is provided through a competitive process. [State-specific, ranking dates](#) for all programs are available. Applications received after ranking dates will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

### **Florida RCPP AND EQIP Application Dates Extended**

Florida private landowners in the St. Marks and Aucilla River watersheds have more time to apply financial and technical assistance from USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) for fiscal year 2023 funding, as the signup deadline has been extended to **September 30, 2022**, announced Juan C. Hernandez, State Conservationist for NRCS in Florida.

The RCPP assistance will help landowners in portions of Leon, Jefferson, Wakulla, Madison, and Taylor counties conduct prescribed burns, remove invasive plants, plant longleaf pine trees, and create wildlife habitat on their property. Applications will be evaluated for funding based on local, state, and nationally developed criteria to optimize environmental benefits. Applications ranking highest in a funding category will be funded according to priority and availability of program funds.

Florida agricultural producers and landowners also have more time to apply to participate in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the current funding cycle, as the signup has been extended to September 30, 2022. The original September 2 deadline was extended to September 30 to allow more farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forestland managers to apply for the program. EQIP applications are accepted throughout the year; however, applications received after this date will be considered for a future funding cycle.

"Using EQIP conservation practices can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving agricultural operations," said Hernandez. "If you have an agricultural resource concern you are ready to address or a management system you want to try, now is the time to apply for EQIP."

Eligible applicants are those who are engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation associated with the land offered for enrollment. Eligible land is that on which agricultural commodities, livestock, or forest-related products are produced, and specifically includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, nonindustrial private forestland, other agricultural land such as environmentally sensitive areas, and agricultural land used to produce livestock. At least one natural resource concern must be identified and addressed with a conservation practice or activity on eligible land.

Interested producers and landowners should act quickly to submit their application to their local NRCS office. Contact your local NRCS field office for more information. Applications for conservation practices and systems that will result in greater environmental benefits for natural resource priorities will receive a higher score and priority to receive an offer for a financial assistance contract.

Once an application has been filed, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with the applicant to identify the applicant's goals and objectives for the land and assess the condition of natural resources. An NRCS conservation planner will present conservation practices or systems to address and enhance these natural resources. The



amount of financial assistance available can vary based on practice priority and applicant status. Each year, NRCS re-evaluates the amount of financial assistance payment rates.

The amount of financial assistance available can vary based on practice priority and applicant status. Each year, NRCS re-evaluates the amount of financial assistance payment rates.

### **Application Requirements**

Applicants will need to provide records and forms necessary to establish farm records and certifications outlined below:

- Farm records established or updated with the Farm Service Agency for the applicant and the land.
- Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.
- Meet the adjusted gross income (AGI) and payment limitation provisions.
- Applicable documentation required for signature authority.
- Have control of land where “control” means possession of the land by ownership, lease, or other agreement.
- Written concurrence from the landowner to apply a structural or vegetative conservation practice.
- Be in compliance with provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers.

### **Program Options**

EQIP provides cost share assistance for producers to use 170-plus conservation practices to address a wide variety of resource concerns. Within EQIP, Conservation Incentive Contracts allow producers to further target priority resource concerns. CSP helps producers take their conservation activities to the next level through comprehensive conservation and advanced conservation activities. ACEP helps producers enroll wetlands, grasslands and farmlands into easements for long-term protection. Additionally, through RCPP, producers and landowners can work with partners who are co-investing with NRCS on targeted projects.

### **Historically Underserved Producer Benefits**

Special provisions are also available for [historically underserved producers](#). For EQIP, historically underserved producers are eligible for advance payments to help offset costs related to purchasing materials or contracting services up front. In addition, historically underserved producers can receive higher EQIP payment rates (up to 90% of average cost). NRCS sets aside EQIP, CSP and ACEP funds for historically underserved producers.

### **Conservation Practices and Climate**

NRCS conservation programs play a critical role in USDA's commitment to partnering with farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and local communities to deliver climate solutions that strengthen agricultural operations and rural America. States may prioritize a variety of voluntary conservation practices through these NRCS programs, including those that support climate-smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF).

In fiscal year 2022, EQIP and CSP will provide targeted funding for CSAF practices, and Conservation Incentive Contracts – a new EQIP program – will be available nationwide with

an emphasis on CSAF practices. Building on these efforts, NRCS will also prioritize climate investments through ACEP, RCPP and Conservation Innovation Grants.

### **More on NRCS**

NRCS, originally called the Soil Conservation Service, was created in 1935 as a direct response to the Dust Bowl. NRCS helps private landowners improve the health of their operations while protecting natural resources for the future. NRCS has 34 field offices throughout Florida with teams ready to help landowners with conservation programs.

Producers, landowners and forest managers interested in applying for assistance should contact the NRCS at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

---

## **USDA Opens People’s Garden Initiative to Gardens Nationwide**

USDA is expanding its People’s Garden Initiative to include eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban and urban areas can be recognized as a “People’s Garden” if they register on the USDA website and meet criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively with other groups, incorporating conservation practices, and educating the public. Affiliated People’s Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People’s Garden sign.



---

## **Applying for Youth Loans**



The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

### **Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:**

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA’s general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources

- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

For help preparing the application forms, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

---

## Dates to Remember

Oct 31 - Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP)

Oct 31 - Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

Dec 31 - A Second Disaster Set-Aside for Farm Loans

Nov 07 - Ballots mailed to eligible voters

Dec 05 - Last day to return voted ballots to the USDA Service Center

---

## Selected Interest Rates for September 2022

Farm Operating - Direct	4.125%
Farm Operating - Microloan	4.125%
Farm Ownership - Direct	4.375%
Farm Ownership - Microloan	4.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency Loan - Amount of Actual Loss	3.750%



**Florida USDA**

4500 NW 27th Ave  
Gainesville, FL 32606

Phone: 352-338-3400

**FSA State Executive Director**  
Deborah Tannenbaum  
[deborah.tannenbaum@usda.gov](mailto:deborah.tannenbaum@usda.gov)

**NRCS State Conservationist**  
Juan Hernandez  
[juan.hernandez@usda.gov](mailto:juan.hernandez@usda.gov)

**RMA Regional Office Director**  
Davina Lee  
[davina.lee@usda.gov](mailto:davina.lee@usda.gov)