

# Florida USDA Newsletter - November 2023

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Florida USDA - November 9, 2023

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

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# Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend November Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production



*Meeting will take place November 29, 1-3 pm ET*

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on November 29 from 1-3 pm. [Learn more and register.](#)

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## Crop Insurance Deadline Nears in Florida for Avocado Fruit



The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida avocado fruit growers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2024 crop year is November 30. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the November 30 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 avocado fruit in Miami-Dade County.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2024 crop year.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov).

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## Crop Insurance Deadline Nears in Florida for Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage and Apiculture Producers

The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida forage, livestock, and honey producers that the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage for the 2024 crop year is December 1. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the December 1 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. Acreage intended for grazing and haying is insurable under the Pasture, Rangeland and Forage (PRF) program, and colonies of bees are insurable under the Apiculture program. The PRF and Apiculture programs for 2024 are under the [Rainfall Index](#) insurance plan. Coverage is available for PRF and Apiculture in all Florida counties. For more information regarding coverage, producers can access RMA [Apiculture Grid ID Locator](#) and the [PRF Support Tool](#) online. Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2024 crop year.

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](http://www.rma.usda.gov).

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## Producers Encouraged to Apply Now for USDA Conservation Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging agricultural producers and forest landowners to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which help a wide variety of producers, including urban and organic producers.



For fiscal year 2024, NRCS has \$3 billion in Inflation Reduction Act funds to invest in [climate-smart mitigation activities](#). This year, NRCS expanded the list of those activities as well as expanded priority areas for ACEP for grasslands, wetlands and farmlands at risk of conversion. Learn more about those expansions in our [Sept. 28, 2023 news release](#).

Additionally, for fiscal year 2024, NRCS has over \$2 billion in Farm Bill funding available to producers for priorities like organic and urban agriculture, soil health, water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat development. This extensive amount of funding will be used to meet producer demand for our oversubscribed programs, maximize climate benefits and help producers address their natural resource challenges.

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round. To apply for fiscal year 2024 funding, apply by your [state's ranking date](#) by contacting your [local NRCS office](#).

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## USDA to Provide More Than \$3 Billion to Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters

The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in 2022.

### Background

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328)* that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by eligible natural disasters that occurred in calendar year 2022.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

ERP 2022 program benefits will be delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. FSA intends to make both tracks available to producers at the same time. This two-track approach enables USDA to:

- Streamline the application process.
- Reduce the paperwork burden on producers.
- Proactively include provisions for underserved producers who have not been well served by past emergency relief efforts.
- Encourage producer participation in existing risk management programs to mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events.

It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks. To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for

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both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

### **ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1**

ERP 2022 Track 1 leverages existing federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments for eligible crop producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs.

Although FSA is sending pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who have crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA, producers indemnified for losses resulting from 2022 natural disasters do not have to wait to receive the application before requesting ERP 2022 assistance. Effective Oct. 31, 2023, producers can apply for ERP 2022 benefits whether they have received the pre-filled application or not. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

USDA estimates that ERP Track 1 benefits will reach more than 206,000 producers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,500 producers who obtained NAP coverage for the 2022 crop year.

### **ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2**

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist eligible producers who suffered an eligible decrease in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year using revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. In cases where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, Track 2 provides an alternative method for establishing revenue. Likewise, Track 2 affords producers of crops that are used within an operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop a method for establishing revenue for the purpose of applying for ERP 2022 benefits. Producers are not required to submit tax records to FSA unless requested by the County Committee if required for an FSA compliance spot check.

Although not required when applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, applicants might find the following documents useful to the process:

- Schedule F (Form 1040)
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Track 2 targets gaps in emergency relief assistance for eligible producers whose eligible losses were not covered by crop insurance or NAP including revenue losses too small (shallow loss) to be covered by crop insurance.

Producers interested in applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, should contact their local FSA county office. Additional reference resources can be found on FSA's [emergency relief website](#).

### **Additional Required Forms**

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. Producers can apply for ERP 2022 starting Oct. 31,

2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Required forms:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs* (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2022 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm the status of their forms can contact their local FSA county office.

### **Future Insurance Coverage Requirements**

All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops.

### **More Information**

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and through your local [FSA county office](#).

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## **Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Florida**





*Access local data to assist with your farming operation including weather forecasts and up-to-date commodity pricing*

Farmers in Florida can now access county specific farming data and USDA resources all in one place via the new farmers.gov local dashboard. Your new farmers.gov local dashboard includes farming data and USDA resources including USDA news, commodity pricing, weather forecasts, historical climate data, past storm events, USDA service center locator and additional state resources for Florida and your county. The dashboard transforms complex data sets into easy-to-read charts and graphs to help you quickly find information that matters to you. [Find Your Local Dashboard | Farmers.gov](#)

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## **Florida Regional Conservation Partnership Program Projects Receive Over \$40.2 Million as Part of Unprecedented \$1 Billion Investment**



The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced improvements to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as well as an unprecedented \$1 billion investment to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects. Recent Florida projects will receive over \$40.2 million in funding. RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Historic funding is made possible by both the

Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, and the Farm Bill.

"The unprecedented demand for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, shows how much interest there is from producers and partners for voluntary conservation on the ground," said Walter Albarran, Acting State Conservationist in Florida for USDA's Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS). “USDA is making historic investments and streamlining the program to make it work better for producers and partners. The combination of historic investments and streamlining actions will deliver conservation at a scale never before achieved through RCPP.”

### **In Florida, two projects were approved for funding:**

**Lake to Lagoon RCPP** – Funded at \$25 million, this project led by Alachua Conservation Trust will accelerate land protection and land management to protect environmentally sensitive and working lands and benefit regional climate mitigation in the low-lying region of East Central Florida, which is bound by large lakes and rivers on the west boundary, and Mosquito and Indian River Lagoons along the Atlantic Coast. The nearly 1.2-million-acre region is home to nearly a million Floridians, as well as a diversity of wildlife, wildlands, and rural farms and timberlands. The Lake to Lagoon faces major climate-induced changes, including increased sea level rise, storm intensity, droughts, and wildfire. Moreover, county populations will increase by 20-50 percent by midcentury.

**Corridor to Coast (C2C)** – Led by North Florida Land Trust, this project was funded at over \$15.2 million to protect and improve ecological conditions of the C2C Corridor all the way out to the East Coast. This includes protection of natural areas, wildlife habitat, and regional water quality as compatible with working lands and the natural resource-based economy of the area. In conjunction, the North Florida Land Trust aims to promote conservation activities that assist State and Federal military installations with sustaining their military training mission. Through the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program, funding is available to complement protection of land around the training center in Camp Blanding, located within the heart of the C2C.

### **Unprecedented RCPP Funding**

The Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act provided funding for this year’s RCPP projects. With this \$1.1 billion investment, NRCS has more than doubled the initial allocation for 2023 to capitalize on the unprecedented demand for RCPP and ensure project partners have the maximum amount of time to successfully implement conservation activities before funds expire in fiscal year 2031. Nationwide, there are:

- 77 climate-focused projects (\$1.02 billion in funding).
- Twenty-two projects focused on water quantity and conservation (more than \$338 million in funding).
- Three RCPP Classic projects are led by Tribes (more than \$58 million in funding).
- Sixteen projects support the protection and restoration of wildlife corridors (\$216 million in funding).
- Ten projects focus on urban agriculture (\$123 million in funding).

For a full list of selected projects visit [our website](#). Read the full news release on at [NRCS Florida’s website](#).

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# North South Institute Host Weekly Online Office Hours to Assist Farmers

North South Institute (NSI) is one of FL FSA's partners and is available to assist farmers and ranchers with their various needs. Every Wednesday at 12:00pm est, NSI hosts their Noon Time Zoom Time to offer free help to farmers and ranchers. They provide assistance with but not limited to the following:

- completing USDA forms
- applying for farm loans
- farm plans
- applying for farm insurance
- applying for disaster assistance



Weekly Wednesday Zoom

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88978525815>

By Phone: +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 889 7852 5815 // Passcode: 222315

For more information please call 954-434-8220 or visit their website: [www.nsie.org](http://www.nsie.org)

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## Florida Financial Assistance Available for Agricultural Producers

*Sign Up by November 17 - Contact USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service*

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Florida announced fiscal year (FY) 2024 (October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024) federal assistance opportunities for agricultural producers, including through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) and the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP). While NRCS accepts applications for these programs year-round, interested applicants should apply no later than November 17, 2023, for FY 2024 EQIP and CSP funding.



“We are very excited to send this announcement to all agricultural producers. The addition of funding from the Inflation Reduction Act establishes a historic investment in our agency’s conservation efforts. In Florida, funding increases for EQIP and CSP exceed 40 percent from FY 2023 funding levels.” said NRCS Florida Acting State Conservationist Walter Albarran. “Our staff is working expeditiously with this tremendous opportunity to reach out to new agricultural producers, serve the historically underserved, and continue to support all agricultural producers as they prepare for the challenges in the years to come.”

Through EQIP, CSP, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), more than \$67 million is available for conservation practices and initiatives, including:

- Nearly \$35 million through the IRA to assist farmers and farmers in implementing climate smart, mitigating activities and clean energy solutions for their daily operations. The new funding authority Act Now will be incorporated as part of IRA funding
- \$2 million for High Tunnels Systems (HTS). The HTS are designed to help producers extend the growing season, increase productivity, keep plants at a steady temperature, and conserve water and energy
- \$5 million to support EQIP Emergency Recovery related to Hurricane Idalia

The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) provides financial assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. These include improved water and air quality, improved irrigation efficiency, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, forest restoration, and creating or enhancing wildlife habitat. For additional information download the EQIP fact sheet (PDF).

Through EQIP, NRCS Florida will be incorporating the new funding authority ACT NOW to accelerate the process of certain conservation applications for the EQIP IRA practices listed below. ACT NOW allows NRCS to immediately approve and obligate a ranked application. This means no longer having to wait for all applications to be reviewed and pre-approved. Applications selected through ACT NOW will be batched and processed in the order received. Selections will be made on a weekly basis.

Read the full news release [here](#).

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## What Farmers Need to Know About Taxes Webinar Hosted by North South Institute

FSA Partner, North South Institute, is hosting a webinar about what farmers need to know about taxes.

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 12:00pm-1:30pm est

Join by Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86927285523>

By Phone: +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 869 2728 5523 // Passcode: 061336

If you have any questions please email: [Agvet@nsied.org](mailto:Agvet@nsied.org) or call 954-434-8220

For more information about North South Institute please click here: [www.nsied.org](http://www.nsied.org)

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## Dates to Remember

Nov 13 - NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Dec 31 - Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Distressed Borrowers

Jan 13 - Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

Jan 31 - Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC)

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## Selected Interest Rates for November 2023

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Farm Operating - Direct                  | 5.375% |
| Farm Operating - Microloan               | 5.375% |
| Farm Ownership - Direct                  | 5.500% |
| Farm Ownership - Microloan               | 5.500% |
| Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing | 3.500% |
| Farm Ownership - Down Payment            | 1.500% |
| Emergency Loan - Amount of Actual Loss   | 3.750% |



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