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## **From the Desk of Matt Russell, State Executive Director**

Iowa farmers are in the middle of the change of seasons. We're transitioning to the end of the growing season. We're marching towards the end of the calendar year. Football, volleyball, and cross-country seasons are winding down while wrestling and basketball seasons are on the horizon.

We're also in a season of change at USDA. We've ended the 2023 fiscal year and continue to wait for a fiscal year 2024 budget. The 2018 Farm Bill has expired and we're waiting for an extension or a new farm bill. What do these transitions mean at your local FSA service center?

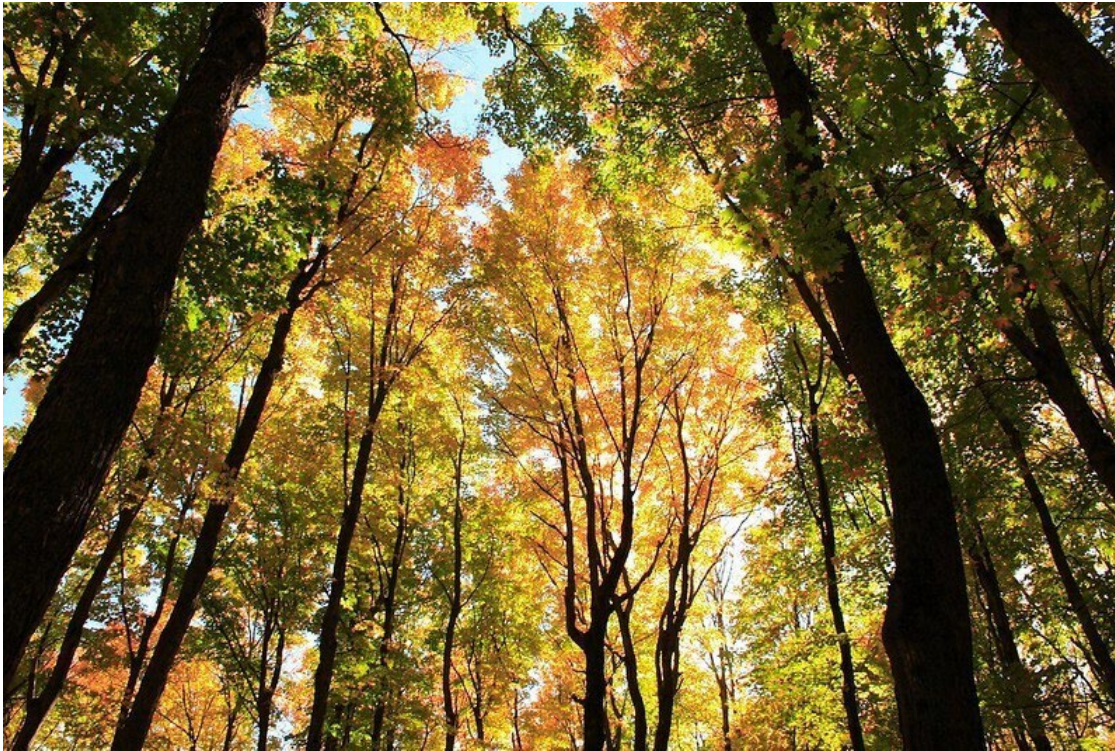
We are still open for business. On the budget side, we're under a continuing resolution through November 17. That means our offices are open and our staff are serving farmers. Congress will determine the budget situation beyond November 17, but for now it's business as usual.

In terms of the farm bill, we continue to serve farmers, but our staff members are making a few adjustments during this time between farm bills. Please reach out to your county office if you have any questions. For example, we're still making loans. We're still making CRP payments. However, we are not currently accepting any new continuous CRP offers. Farmers with PLC and ARC contracts are still protected for the 2023 crop year under the expired 2018 farm bill, however, we do not have a Title 1 program, like ARC/PLC, available for program year 2024 until such time as an extension or new farm bill is put in place.

The Biden-Harris Administration continues to support keeping our offices fully staffed to serve Iowa producers. Under the continuing resolution through November 17, we are advertising and hiring for open positions at Iowa FSA. [Keep looking here to see open positions.](#)

Congress will need to pass a new farm bill or extend the 2018 farm bill that expired at the end of last month. Congress will need to provide the funding so Iowa FSA can continue to serve Iowa farmers and ranchers. As these decisions are made, the team at Iowa FSA is here to help and answer any questions about how we can support you and your farming operation.

Matt



## **FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections**

The 2023 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 6, 2023, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 4, 2023.

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:

- Be of legal voting age or, if not of legal voting age, supervise and conduct the farming operation of an entire farm.
- Have an interest in a farm or ranch as either:
  - An individual who meets one or more of the following:
    - Is eligible and capable to vote in one's own right.
    - Is a partner of a general partnership.
    - Is a member of a joint venture.
  - Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information to FSA about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received program benefits.

More information on county committees can be found at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) or by contacting your local FSA office.

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# USDA's Conservation Reserve Program Pays More Than \$1.77 Billion to America's Producers in Support of Conservation and Climate-Smart Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued more than \$1.77 billion this year to agricultural producers and landowners through its Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a critical piece of the Department's efforts to support climate-smart agriculture and forestry on working lands. This year, CRP's more than 667,000 participants received payments from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) for their voluntary conservation efforts on more than 23 million acres of private land. Since 2021, CRP has grown by 21% in terms of acres enrolled, testament to the Biden-Harris administration's program improvement efforts.

Top five states for CRP participant payments:

- Iowa, \$402,508,900
- Illinois, \$172,723,800
- Minnesota, \$150,773,400
- South Dakota, \$129,545,200
- Missouri, \$99,849,600

## Improvements to CRP

Since 2021, FSA has made improvements to the program:

- **Introducing a new climate-smart practice incentive** for CRP general and continuous signups designed to reward participants who implement conservation practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Enabling additional soil rental rate adjustments** or rate flexibilities, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increasing payments for practice incentives** from 20% to 50%. This incentive, in addition to cost share payments, for continuous CRP practices is based on establishment cost.
- **Increasing payments for water quality practices rates** from 10% to 20% for certain water quality benefiting practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers and filter strips.
- **Establishing a Grassland CRP minimum rental rate** benefitting more than 1,000 counties with rates currently below the \$13 minimum.

Additionally, FSA made significant improvements to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that reduce barriers by making the partnership program more accessible to a broader cross-section of agricultural producers and new conservation partners. These program improvements include the flexibility for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance and the ability for FSA to invest in additional, full-time staff devoted to working directly with our CREP partners and program specialists in FSA's state offices.

Since 2021, FSA has also entered into the first-ever Tribal Nations CREP agreements in partnership with the Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Oglala Sioux Tribes. And in 2022, USDA entered into the Big Sioux River Watershed CREP agreement with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks to assist farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife habitat, and create public hunting and fishing access. These CREP agreements reflect priorities and goals of USDA to broaden the scope and reach of its voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs to engage underserved producers.

FSA's conservation programs had a strong showing in 2023. FSA partnered with producers and landowners to enroll 3.9 million CRP this year—including 927,000 enrolled acres through General CRP, 2.3 million acres enrolled in Grassland CRP and 694,000 acres enrolled in Continuous CRP. These results underscore the continued importance of CRP as a tool to help producers invest in the long-term health, sustainability, and profitability of their land and natural resources.

## More Information

CRP is a voluntary program contract with agricultural producers through which environmentally sensitive agricultural land is devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

To learn more about CRP and other FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## Share Your Harvesting Experience for Farmers.gov's #Harvest2023 Campaign

As America's farmers harvest the crops that feed, clothe, and fuel our world, let's fill the Farmers.gov 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 #Plant2023 campaign in the spring.

To share your experience on @FarmersGov social media, follow these steps:

- Collect photos of what's happening on your operation as you harvest.
- 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](mailto: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.

Remember to follow @FarmersGov on [Facebook](#), [X](#) (formerly known as Twitter), and [Instagram](#), and we look forward to sharing your story!

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# Inflation Reduction Act Section 22007 – Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

On July 7, USDA and its partner vendors announced the opening of the application period for Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which directs USDA to provide financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. The opening of the application process is an important step in delivering on USDA's commitment of providing financial assistance to those who have faced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs. The application process is open now and will close on January 13, 2024. Borrowers will have the option to apply for assistance online via [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov) or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov). The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program. Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970 or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available. It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021, and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the January 13, 2024, deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. The official application process and filling out an application is **free** and does not require a lawyer.

For more information, please visit [22007apply.gov](https://22007apply.gov). If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, there's a button there to subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

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## Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations

The August milk margin triggered the eighth consecutive payment for dairy producers who obtained [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) for the 2023 program year. August's income over feed margin is \$6.46 per hundredweight (cwt.) with projected DMC payments totaling \$120 million. To date, including the projected August payments, dairy producers have received more than \$1.2 billion in much needed economic support for 2023 and margin forecasts indicate the likelihood of more to come before the end of the calendar year.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program administered by USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

## Additional Dairy Assistance

DMC complements other assistance available to dairy producers, including the [Milk Loss Program](#) (MLP) and the [Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program](#) (ODMAP).

MLP covers milk that was dumped or removed, without compensation, from the commercial milk market due to qualifying weather events and the consequences of those weather events that inhibited delivery or storage of milk (e.g., power outages, impassable roads, infrastructure losses, etc.) during calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

USDA recently announced a second round of payments for dairy producers through ODMAP, providing an additional \$5 million to help dairy producers with marketing costs to mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. FSA has already paid out \$15 million in the first round of payments for eligible producers, bringing total ODMAP payments to \$20 million.

## More Information

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and view other farm records data and customer information by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). Producers without an account can [sign up](#) today.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under 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 safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and 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 [usda.gov](#).



## USDA Offers New Crop Insurance Program for Producers Using Controlled Environments

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing a new crop insurance program designed for agricultural producers who use controlled environments in their operations. The new Controlled Environment program from USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is specifically for plants grown in fully enclosed controlled environments and provides coverage against plant diseases subject to destruction orders. Available beginning in the 2024 crop year, the Controlled Environment program provides a risk management resource for urban, specialty crop, and organic producers who often use controlled environments as a major part of their operations. The first sales closing date is Dec. 1, 2023. [Learn more](#).

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# USDA Announces 2024 Tribal Scholarships and Fellowships

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced two tribal higher education opportunities to train the next generation of agricultural professionals and strengthen ties with tribal higher education institutions. The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program offers a fast-track career path with USDA, and the Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Faculty Fellowship engages tribal college faculty with USDA resources and research. These programs reflect USDA's commitment to advance equity and remove barriers to service for tribal nations and encourage tribal workforce development. Today's announcement also marks the 29th anniversary of the day legislation was signed to give tribal colleges land-grant status.

[Read the full USDA announcement](#)



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