



Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

News & Updates from the Iowa Farm Service Agency - July 30, 2024

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From the Desk of Matt Russell, State Executive Director

All across the state, we’ve been celebrating county fairs. Next week it’s time for Fair Fever, as the [Iowa State Fair](#) runs August 8-18. In Iowa, we know how to do fairs. We celebrate food, agriculture, community, entertainment, and youth. We also know how to celebrate service. These fairs happen because Iowans volunteer to serve on fair boards. Most of these board members are elected. They represent local democracy in action.

Farm Service Agency also has local democracy in action: elected county committee members. This is the last week to nominate eligible farmers who will stand as candidates when voting takes place in December. See information below for requirements to run, including how you qualify as a farmer or rancher and where you live in terms of the Local Administrative Areas (LAA) that are having elections this year. If your LAA is holding an election this year, make sure you get nominations postmarked by August 1st. Farmers can nominate themselves. Don’t hold back, we’re always looking for people willing to serve.

As we continue to experience summertime extreme weather, know that the Biden-Harris administration is working with Iowa elected leaders to provide support to Iowans effected by these disasters. Please continue to work with your local county office to inquire about support we may have to help you in your recovery. There are many channels that local, state, and federal governments have to work through in order to implement the full scope of support Iowa FSA may

have in any one county. You can find updated information on our [Iowa FSA homepage](#) including information on disaster designations and [assistance available](#). As always, reach out to your local office with any questions, we are here to help!

Farm Service Agency Seeking Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2024.

Elections for committee members will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a geographic information system locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority, women, urban and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms.

Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster recovery, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues.

You should contact your local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in your county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, you must be registered and sign an FSA-669A nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug. 1, 2024, deadline. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November 2024.

USDA Provides Local Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers – Meet Becky Kilburg, Iowa’s Beginning Farmer Coordinator



The first 10 years of a farming or ranching operation are tough. USDA recognizes you need dedicated support to help make sense of all the information coming your way. Now each state has a Beginning Farmer and Rancher team headed up by a state coordinator. The coordinator helps producers who have operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 years navigate USDA and partner resources.

Becky Kilburg is the Iowa Coordinator. Becky is a Farm Loan Analyst with FSA. She can be reached at Rebecca.Kilburg@usda.gov or (563) 652-3237.

USDA Offers Assistance and Resources for Recovery from and Prevention of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 in Dairy Herds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), also known as H5N1, in dairy cattle in 12 states including Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. To protect the U.S. livestock industry from the threat posed by HPAI H5N1 USDA is taking a number of actions with our federal partners.

On April 24, APHIS announced a federal order that includes mandatory testing for interstate movement of dairy cattle and mandatory reporting of influenza A detections in livestock. In addition to the Federal Order mandates, USDA provides several voluntary testing and monitoring options, including the [HPAI Dairy Herd Status Program](#) announced on May 31, 2024. APHIS has released a list of [requirements and recommendations](#) that apply to interstate moving of lactating dairy cattle, [testing guidance](#) for livestock, and answers to [frequently asked questions](#). Producers are encouraged to visit the APHIS HPAI Livestock Detection [website](#) for information about these programs and requirements, as well as the most comprehensive and timely updates about this rapidly evolving situation.

Assistance for Milk Loss

Confirmed H5N1 Positive Test Results Required for Recovery Assistance

Producers who incur milk losses in their dairy herds due to HPAI H5N1 can now apply for financial assistance through the USDA’s updated Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded ELAP policy through the rule-making process to assist with financial losses resulting from reduced milk production when cattle are removed from commercial milking in dairy herds having a confirmed positive H5N1 test. Positive tests must be confirmed through the USDA’s APHIS’ National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

To apply, producers need to submit the following to FSA:

- Proof of herd infection through a confirmed positive H5N1 test (based on USDA’s APHIS [H5N1 case definition](#)) on individual animal or bulk tank samples confirmed by APHIS’ NVSL;
- A notice of loss indicating the date when the loss is apparent, which is the sample collection date for the positive H5N1 test; and

- An application for payment certifying the number of eligible adult dairy cows removed from production, the month the cows were removed from production, and the producer's share in the milk production.

The final date to file a notice of loss and application for payment for eligible losses is 30 days after the end of the prior calendar year, which is **January 30**.

Note: *To determine livestock and producer eligibility for ELAP H5N1 assistance, to submit an application or if you've not previously conducted business with FSA, contact your local FSA county office for details. [Find your local office](#). Other online resources include [frequently asked questions](#) and a [fact sheet](#).*

Loans for Biosecurity Implementation

FSA also provides direct and guaranteed loans for farmers and ranchers that can assist with implementation of biosecurity measures for their operations. Loans can assist with:

- Installing physical barriers to facilitate quarantine, to prevent livestock interaction with wildlife, and to prevent unauthorized access by visitors
- Purchase of disinfectant, footbaths, and disposable footwear and clothing;
- Veterinary costs related to vaccination and general animal health;
- Testing of feed and water sources for toxins and other disease;
- Costs associated with responsible manure disposal and management;
- Costs associated with cleaning and disinfecting livestock transportation equipment; and
- Other biosecurity measures recommended by USDA or other applicable agencies.

To learn more about loans, producers can use the:

- [Loan Assistance Tool](#) – helps producers better navigate the farm loan process. The online Loan Assistance Tool provides producers needing agricultural financing with an interactive, step-by-step guide.
- [Farm Loans Overview Factsheet](#) – provides an overview of all FSA direct and guaranteed loans, and eligibility requirements.
- [Farm Loans Homepage](#) – gives in-depth farm loan information, including fact sheets, for those who don't want to use the online Loan Assistance Tool.

To learn more about ELAP or farm loans, producers should contact the FSA at the [local USDA Service Center](#).

To learn more about APHIS requirements and resources, visit APHIS' [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock webpage](#).

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property



Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

USDA Announces August 14 Application Deadline for Emergency Relief Program Assistance for Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced the deadline for commodity and specialty crop producers to apply for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) for 2022 natural disaster losses is Aug. 14, 2024. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) began accepting ERP 2022 applications in October 2023.

Through the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328) Congress allocated \$3.2 billion in funding to cover an estimated \$10 billion in uncovered crop losses.

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 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.

In fall 2023, FSA began issuing pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who had crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist 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.

It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks (ERP 2022 Track 1 and Track 2). To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

Additional Required Forms

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the Aug. 14 application deadline. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA by Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2024.

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.
 - *Note: Currently, there is a Federal court injunction that prohibits USDA from "making or increasing payments, or providing any additional relief, based on its 'socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher' designation" under ERP 2022. This may impact certain payments.*
- 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 FSA's [Emergency Relief webpage](#), in the [ERP Track 1](#) and [ERP Track 2](#) fact sheets and through the FSA at your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities by State



USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities effort is expanding markets for America's climate-smart commodities, leveraging the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production, and providing direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Learn more about expanded markets, premiums and incentives for producing climate-smart commodities as well as cost share and technical assistance to implement climate-smart practices. [Find a project near you and get started today!](#)

USDA Now Accepting Applications for Available Funds to Help Cover Organic Certification Costs

Through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will cover up to 75% of organic certification costs at a maximum of \$750 per certification category. FSA is now accepting applications, and organic producers and handlers should apply for OCCSP by the Oct. 31, 2024, deadline for eligible expenses incurred from Oct. 1, 2023, to Sept. 30, 2024. FSA will issue payments as applications are received and approved.

OCCSP was part of a [broader organic announcement](#) made by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on May 15, 2024, which also included the Organic Market Development Grant program and Organic Transition Initiative.

Eligible Applicants, Expenses and Categories

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of organic agricultural commodities for expenses incurred obtaining or maintaining organic certification under USDA's [National Organic Program](#). Eligible OCCSP applicants include any certified organic producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent.

Cost share assistance covers expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, inspector travel expenses, user fees, sales assessments and postage. OCCSP pays a maximum of \$750 per certification category for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling, and state organic program fees (California only).

How to Apply

To apply, producers and handlers should contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) and be prepared to provide documentation of organic certification and eligible expenses. OCCSP applications can also be submitted through participating state departments of agriculture. For more information, visit the [OCCSP webpage](#).

Opportunity for State Departments of Agriculture

FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA posted a [funding opportunity summary on grants.gov](#) and will electronically mail the Notice of Funding Opportunity to all eligible state departments of agriculture. Applications are due July 12, 2024.

If a state department of agriculture chooses to participate in OCCSP, both the state department of agriculture and FSA county offices in that state will accept OCCSP applications and make payments to eligible certified operations. Producers or handlers can receive OCCSP assistance from either FSA or the participating state department of agriculture but not both.

More Information

USDA offers other assistance for organic producers, including the [Organic Transition Initiative \(OTI\)](#), which includes direct farmer assistance for organic production and processing and conservation. For more information on organic agriculture, visit [farmers.gov/organic](#).

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](#). If you don't have an account, sign up today.

Emergency Conservation Program Signups Underway in 19 Iowa Counties

To help address damages from recent severe weather in Iowa, [19 counties](#) are currently holding Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) signups. Those counties include: **Adair, Adams, Clay, Dickinson, East Pottawattamie, Emmet, Harrison, Kossuth, Lyon, Monona, Montgomery, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Shelby, Sioux, Union, and Woodbury.**

If you've suffered severe damage, you may be eligible for assistance under the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters and put in place methods for water conservation during severe drought. The ECP does this through funding and technical assistance.

For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if untreated, would:

- be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be needed to return the land to productive agricultural use
- is unusual and is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area
- affect the productive capacity of the farmland
- impair or endanger the land

If you qualify for ECP assistance, you may receive cost-share levels not to exceed 75 percent of the eligible cost of restoration measures. Eligible socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 90 percent of the eligible cost of restoration. No one is eligible for more than \$500,000 cost sharing per natural disaster occurrence.

To be eligible for assistance, practices must not be started until all the following are met:

- an application for cost-share assistance has been filed
- the local FSA County Committee (COC) or its representative has conducted an onsite inspection of the damaged area
- the Agency responsible for technical assistance, such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), has made a needs determination, which may include cubic yards of earthmoving, etc., required for rehabilitation

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FSA must complete an environmental compliance review prior to producers taking any actions.

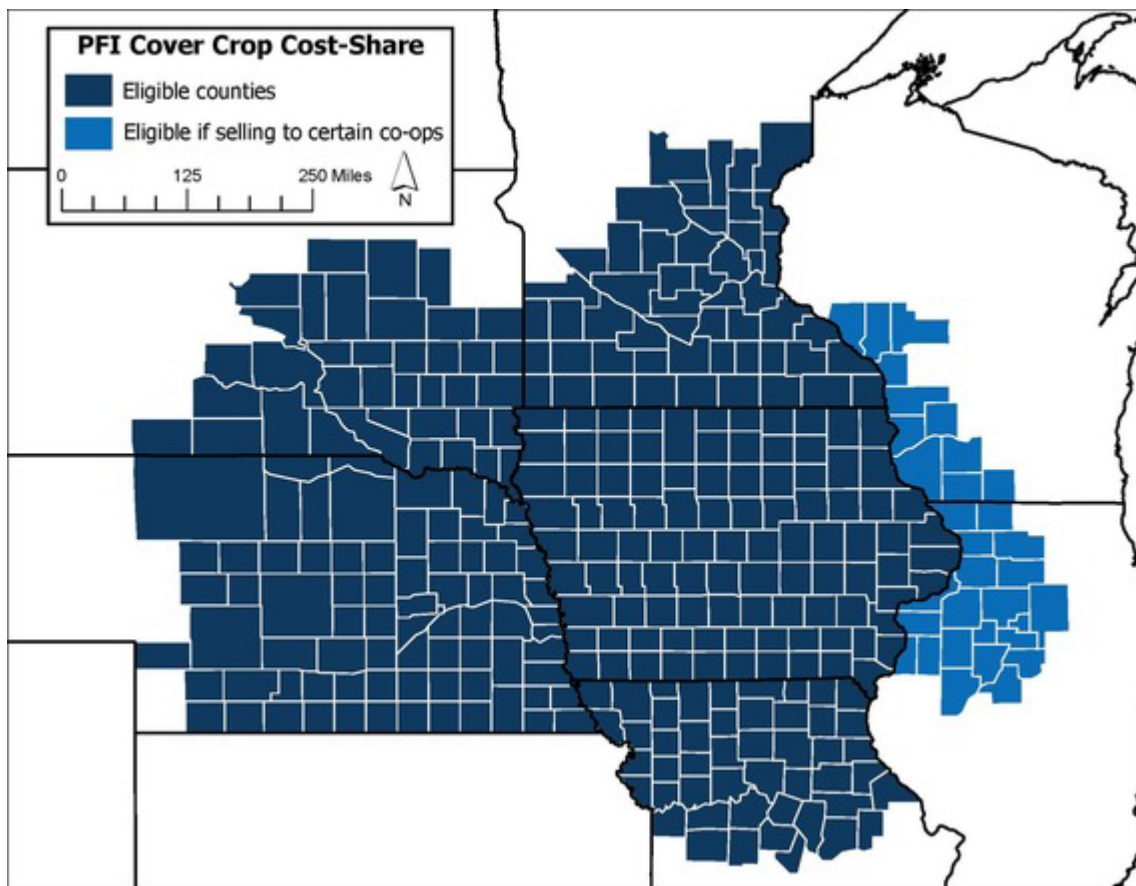
For more information about ECP, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Practical Farmers Offers Cover Crop Cost-Share Program

Practical Farmers offers cost-share and technical assistance for those who are seeding fall cover crops.

Payment rates are \$10 or \$15 per acre on unlimited acres. Stack this program with any publicly funded program. Participants must farm in eligible counties (see map).

Questions? Reach out to the cover crop cost-share team at covercrops@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661. Visit bit.ly/CoverCrop24 to learn more about the program.



Farm Service Agency Call Center

Farmers and ranchers can contact a call center to receive one-on-one assistance from USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees ready to help. By calling 877-508-8364, customers can ask questions about FSA programs.

The call center was created as a way to better serve customers, especially those who have not worked with FSA previously.

Customers who contact the call center can expect to receive the same great service they would receive as if they were in their FSA county office.

FSA Call Center staff can also provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers using the call center will still call 877-508-8364 and select 1 for English and 2 to speak with a Spanish-speaking employee. For other languages, customers select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

The call center is just one of many ways USDA has adjusted and added flexibilities to meet the needs of our customers. One thing remains the same, USDA stands committed to offering exceptional customer service to our nation's farmers and ranchers.

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