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From the Desk of Matt Russell, State Executive Director

Historic extreme weather continues to challenge Iowans. After April and May tornadoes, we now have record breaking floods. In the face of these devastating events, Iowans can look to local, state, and federal government for some support. In a democracy, government is an important way we help each other, especially in emergencies and disasters.

President Biden has been quickly responding to Governor Reynolds's calls for disaster declarations. Secretary Vilsack has been encouraging all of us in the field to be as flexible, responsive, and creative as we can at USDA. FEMA is on the ground and working closely with local and state agencies to make sure Iowans can access the resources they are eligible to receive as they face these widespread disasters.

Accessing support can be challenging, especially, when the process involves applications and deadlines. I'm using this month's comments to provide some information about how Iowa farmers and ranchers can access some of these resources.

For USDA programs, start with contacting your county office. Programs that can be helpful in a disaster at Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development are all about long term recovery rather than an immediate emergency response. When disaster hits, local emergency management coordinators and local jurisdictions are on the front lines. So are volunteers. Your immediate needs are to focus on your family, caring for your livestock, protecting your property, helping your neighbors, and navigating insurance. Being focused on those actions will not negatively impact the support USDA might be able to provide. When you are able to reach out to USDA for help, start with contacting your local county office. While you don't need to contact the office in the immediate response, do try and reach out once things have stabilized. Many programs have deadlines. The sooner you start working with the county office, the better we're able to help you avoid missing deadlines.

While you are in the immediate response time, do try and keep records of the loss and any response or expenses in recovering from the disaster. Dated photos are helpful. Keeping notes and saving receipts are also useful things to do for accessing programs and loans. Your local agricultural leaders in your county office can talk with you about how programs have changed, any new programs we might have, and how regular programs could also help farmers in an emergency or disaster.

This [website](#) includes a wide range of resources from FSA and NRCS that can be helpful to farmers recovering from extreme weather.

In addition, here are some other resources that might be helpful.

Iowa USDA, FEMA, The Iowa Governor's office, Iowa Health and Human Services, Iowa Homeland Security, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and other groups have been working together to help better communicate what resources may be available to Iowa farmers and ranchers. This resource includes descriptions of potential support and links to how to access that help.

[IOWA Disaster Agriculture Resource Guide](#)

FEMA, working with local and state organizations, is also offering Agricultural Recovery Centers for people to interact directly with different agencies in one location. The next event is Friday June 28 at Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny.

The State of Iowa has a [Disaster Recovery site](#).

Additionally, many people hit by tornadoes in April and May can access Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP). This is the program that used to be called Food Stamps and qualifying households can receive a one-month benefit. [Check this website for more information.](#)

The deadline to apply is June 29. Farmers and ranchers can work with an Iowa HHS staff member to see if they qualify. D-SNAP uses different qualifying rules than regular SNAP. People who may not normally qualify for SNAP, based on income, may qualify for D-SNAP if they lived in one of the listed ZIP codes listed during April 26-27 or May 20-21, 2024, and suffered one or more of the following disaster-related expenses:

- Loss of or no access to income due to the disaster, including reduced, terminated, or delayed receipt of income
- Home or self-employment business repairs, including supplies paid for out of pocket and not reimbursed during the 30-day period of time
- Temporary shelter expenses

Polk County to Host Agriculture Recovery Center

State, federal and local agencies, in conjunction with farming industry groups, will host a one-day Agriculture Recovery Center in Ankeny IA, on Friday, June 28 from noon to 8 p.m.

The walk-through event, designed as a resource fair, will provide information on addressing agricultural or rural needs, caused by recent severe weather, that are not covered by standard FEMA or state programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Iowa Insurance Division and other government agencies are working with industry organizations such as Iowa Pork Producers, Iowa Soybean and Iowa Cattlemen to ensure unmet needs are identified and resources are shared.

Location and Time:

Polk County (Friday, June 28 -- Noon to 8 p.m.) Des Moines Area Community College 2006 Ankeny Blvd. Ankeny, IA

Download the Iowa Disaster Agriculture Resource Guide here:

<https://www.iowa.gov/resources-0/agricultural-resources>

FEMA offers different assistance programs for individual citizens, public groups including government agencies and private nonprofit organizations. To find the FEMA help you need following a disaster event, visit [fema.gov/assistance](https://www.fema.gov/assistance).

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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.

Urban and Suburban County Committees

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees and make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. FSA established county committees specifically focused on urban agriculture that work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the county committees may address food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction.

Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Urban county committee members provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs, serve as

the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

The 27 cities with urban county committees are listed at fsa.usda.gov/elections and farmers.gov/urban. Of these, ten urban county committees will hold an inaugural election this cycle.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer 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.

The infographic features a dark blue header with the text "2024 COUNTY COMMITTEE ELECTIONS" in large white font. Below the header, five circular icons are arranged horizontally, each with a corresponding date and description. The icons represent: 1) A pencil writing on a document (JUN. 17, 2024), 2) A document with a checkmark and an upload arrow (AUG. 1, 2024), 3) An envelope (NOV. 4, 2024), 4) A ballot being placed into a box (DEC. 2, 2024), and 5) Three stylized human figures (JAN. 1, 2025). At the bottom of the infographic, there is an illustration of six diverse people (three men and three women) standing in a row in front of a barn and greenery. The background of the infographic is a teal color with white dotted lines separating the five columns.

Date	Event
JUN. 17, 2024	Beginning of nomination period. Forms available at fsa.usda.gov/elections .
AUG. 1, 2024	Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA county office.
NOV. 4, 2024	Ballots mailed to eligible voters.
DEC. 2, 2024	Last day to return voted ballots to the local FSA county office.
JAN. 1, 2025	Newly elected county committee members take office.

USDA Reminds Iowa Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Iowa should make an appointment with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to complete [crop acreage reports](#) before the applicable deadline after planting is complete.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch, its intended use and location. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in State:

- **July 15, 2024 All crops including perennial forages**
- **December 16, 2024 Fall-seeded small grains**

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety
- Intended crop use
- Number of crop acres
- Map with approximate crop boundaries
- Planting date(s)
- Planting pattern, when applicable
- Producer shares
- Irrigation practice(s)
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable
- Other required information

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or crop harvesting begins.

Prevented Planted Acreage

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant but were unable to because of a natural disaster, including drought. Prevented planted acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA).

FSA recently updated policy that applies to prevented planted acreage due to drought. To certify prevented planted acreage due to drought, all of the following must apply:

- The area that is prevented from being planted has insufficient soil moisture for seed germination on the final planting date for non-irrigated acreage.
- Prolonged precipitation deficiencies that meet the D3 or D4 drought intensity level as determined by the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- Verifiable information must be collected from sources whose business or purpose is recording weather conditions as determined by FSA.

Continuous Certification Option for Perennial Forage

Agricultural producers with perennial forage crops have the option to report their acreage once, without having to report that acreage in subsequent years, as long as there are no applicable changes on the farm. Interested producers can select the continuous certification option after FSA certifies their acreage report. Examples of perennial forage include mixed forage, birdsfoot trefoil, chicory/radicchio, kochia (prostrata), lespedeza, perennial peanuts and perennial grass varieties.

Once the continuous certification option is selected, the certified acreage will roll forward annually with no additional action required by the producer in subsequent years unless the acreage report changes.

Farmers.gov Portal

Producers can access their FSA farm records, maps, and common land units through the farmers.gov customer portal. The portal allows producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries within farm records mapping. Producers can view, print and label their maps for acreage reporting purposes. Level 2 eAuthentication or login.gov access that is linked to a USDA Business Partner customer record is required to use the portal.

Producers can visit farmers.gov/account to learn more about creating an account. Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via an FSA-211 *Power of Attorney* form, Business Partner Signature Authority or as a member of a business can now access information for the business in the farmers.gov portal.

More Information

For questions, producers should call their FSA county office. To find their FSA county office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

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

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 July 11 from 12-5 p.m. Eastern.

Meeting details can be viewed in the [Federal Register Notice](#). Written comments can be submitted via UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov by July 25 at 11:59 p.m. The Committee will deliberate and vote on proposed recommendations and address public comments during the meeting. USDA will share the agenda between 24 to 48 hours prior to the meeting on the [Committee's webpage](#).

The Committee is managed by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and was established through the 2018 Farm Bill and is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture.

[Learn more and register.](#)

The infographic features the USDA logo and the text 'U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE' and 'Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production'. The main title is 'Ways to Get Involved' with an icon of three people. Below are four items:

- Attend Public Meetings**: Accompanied by a computer monitor icon.
- Sign-up for Email Updates**: Accompanied by an envelope icon with an '@' symbol.
- Email Public Comments to UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov**: Accompanied by a megaphone icon.
- Learn More at usda.gov/urban**: Accompanied by an information 'i' icon.

USDA Awards \$50 Million to Support Farmworkers and Agricultural Employers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is awarding \$50 million to 141 awardees in 40 states and Puerto Rico, through the Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program (FLSP Program), reaching 177 unique agricultural operations and over 11,000 workers. The awards will help improve the resiliency of the U.S. food supply chain by addressing agriculture labor challenges and instability, strengthen protections for farmworkers, and expand legal pathways for labor migration. This program delivers on a commitment made as part of the [Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection](#) and furthers the Administration's commitment to a regional approach to migration in the hemisphere.

USDA announced the FLSP Program in September 2023, in coordination with other federal agencies, to help address workforce needs in agriculture; promote a safe and healthy work environment, as well as ethical recruitment for farmworkers; and support lawful migration pathways for workers, including expansion of labor pathways for workers from Northern Central America, through the H-2A visa program. FLSP was designed with significant input from immigration, labor, and agricultural stakeholders – informed by the experiences of farmworkers and farmers themselves.

The FLSP Program grants will support a range of required and elective supplemental commitments to expand benefits and protections for all employees. Examples of awardee commitments include:

- Establishing robust pay-related benefits that have the potential to raise earnings for thousands of workers, as well as provide them more time with their families or taking care of their health through policies such as personal and paid sick time off, and mid-season vacation leave;
- Markedly improving working and living conditions by strengthening employer-employee engagement, such as establishing Collaborative Working Groups with robust farmworker representation and partnerships with external organizations that have longstanding experience collaborating with farmworkers;
- Providing additional worker-friendly benefits, such as advancement and management training opportunities, driver's license training, no-cost English classes for employees, and additional recreation spaces in housing facilities;
- Supporting Know-Your-Rights-and-Resources training sessions for all workers to ensure they understand their legal rights as workers in the United States;
- Participation in Worker-driven Social Responsibility programs – a proven model for improving workplace environments – such as the Fair Food Program;
- Disclosing recruitment practices and advancing ethical, safe recruitment practices that are essential to protecting workers from illegal fees, undue debt, exploitation, and even human trafficking;
- 60 percent of employer awardees that plan to utilize the H-2A visa program committed to recruiting workers from Northern Central America.

[View the complete list of awardees](#)

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In 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 www.usda.gov.

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.

USDA Expands Funding Opportunities for Specialty Crop Growers to Help Offset On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for 2024 and 2025

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding the [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops \(FSCSC\) program](#) to now include medium-sized businesses in addition to small businesses. Eligible specialty crop growers can apply for assistance for expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification. The program has also been expanded to include assistance for 2024 and 2025 expenses. Producers can apply for assistance on their calendar year 2024 expenses beginning July 1, 2024, through Jan. 31, 2025. For program year 2025, the application period will be Jan. 1, 2025, through Jan. 31, 2026.

Program Details

FSCSC assists specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety. FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing its certification, as well as a portion of related expenses.

Eligible FSCSC applicants must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small or medium-size business and have paid eligible expenses related to certification.

- A small business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops sold by the applicant during the three-year period preceding the program year of no more than \$500,000.
- A medium size business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops the applicant sold during the three-year period preceding the program year of at least \$500,001 but no more than \$1,000,000.

Specialty crop operations can receive the following cost assistance:

- 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.
- Training.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each eligible cost category. Details about payment rates and limitations are available at farmers.gov/food-safety.

Applying for Assistance

Interested applicants have until Jan. 31, 2025, to apply for assistance for 2024 eligible expenses. FSA will issue payments as applications are processed and approved. For program year 2025, the application period will be January 1, 2025, through January 31, 2026. FSA will issue 50% of the calculated payment for program year 2025 following application approval, with the remaining amount to be paid after the application deadline. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Specialty crop producers can apply by completing the [FSA-888-1, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program \(FSCSC\) for Program Years 2024 and 2025](#) application. The application, along with the [AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet](#) and [SF-3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form](#), if not already on file with FSA, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. Alternatively, producers with an eAuthentication account can apply for FSCSC [online](#). Producers interested in creating an eAuthentication account should visit farmers.gov/sign-in.

Specialty crop producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a FSA employee ready to assist. Visit farmers.gov/food-safety for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

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 Reminds Producers of Climate-Smart Opportunities Using Farm Loan Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that Farm Loan Programs can be used to support a variety of climate-smart agriculture practices, which build on many practices that farmers and ranchers already use, like cover cropping, nutrient management and conservation tillage.

Climate-smart agricultural practices generate significant environmental benefits by capturing and sequestering carbon, improving water management, restoring soil health and more. Farm loan funding complements other tools to help producers adopt climate-smart practices, such as FSA's [Conservation Reserve Program](#), [crop insurance options](#) that support conservation, and [conservation programs](#) offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

FSA offers [multiple types of loans](#) to help farmers and ranchers start, expand or maintain a family agricultural operation. These loans can provide the capital needed to invest in climate-smart practices and equipment including the establishment of rotational grazing systems, precision agriculture equipment or machinery for conversion to no-till residue management. Additionally, for programs like Conservation Reserve Program and NRCS conservation programs where USDA and the producer share the implementation cost, a farm loan could be used for the producer's share, if consistent with the authorized loan purpose.

Some additional ways farm loans can be leveraged to invest in climate-smart agriculture practices or equipment include:

- **Precision Agriculture Equipment** - Eligible producers could use a Term Operating Loan to purchase equipment like GPS globes, monitors, or strip till fertilizer equipment.
- **Cover Crops** - Eligible producers could use an Annual Operating Loan for seed costs.
- **No/Reduced Till** - Eligible producers could use a Term Operating Loan to purchase equipment.
- **Livestock Facility Air Scrubber or Waste Treatment** - Eligible producers could use a Farm Ownership Loan for capital improvements to livestock facilities.
- **Cross Fencing** - Eligible producers could use an Annual or Term Operating Loan to purchase fencing and installation equipment.

Visit the [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry webpage on farmers.gov](#) to learn more and see detailed examples of how an FSA farm loan can support climate-smart agriculture practices.

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