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USDA Extends Application Deadline for Revenue Loss Programs to July 14



USDA is extending the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) to July 14, 2023, to give producers more time to apply for assistance. The original deadline was June 2.

Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to agricultural producers and provide assistance in completing an ERP Phase Two application. The extended deadline will give producers more time to work with these partner organizations and apply for assistance.

Cooperative Agreements for ERP Phase Two Application Assistance

Through cooperative agreements with FSA, the following organizations are providing free assistance to producers across the United States and territories.

- [Alabama State Association of Cooperatives](#)
- [Farmers Legal Action Group, INC.](#)
- [Flower Hill Institute](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council, Inc](#)
- [North South Institute](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside II](#)
- [Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA](#)
- [Rural Coalition](#)
- [Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO](#)

Depending on a producer's location, these nine partners can provide assistance either by phone or through online meeting software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

There is never a charge for technical assistance provided by FSA employees or cooperative agreement recipients. These organizations will assist producers with completing the application and any follow-up future insurance coverage requirements. Producers who receive ERP payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years. These organizations will not collect producer records, complete or sign the application form, or act on the producer's behalf in any way throughout this process.

Find more information on FSA cooperative agreements and contact information for the nine organizations please visit fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index.

Eligibility

To be eligible for ERP Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Assistance will be primarily to producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or NAP, since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One.

To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a 15% or greater decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a baseline year.

FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that can help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue for each respective program.

Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two and PARP assistance. Producers should also keep in mind that July 15 is a major deadline to complete acreage reports for most crops. FSA encourages producers to complete the ERP Phase Two application, PARP application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

More Information

For more information, view the [ERP Phase Two Fact Sheet](#), [PARP Fact Sheet](#), the [ERP Phase Two-PARP Comparison Fact Sheet](#), [ERP Phase Two application video tutorial](#), [PARP application video tutorial](#), [myth-buster blog](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Know your Final Planting Dates

All producers are encouraged to contact their [local FSA office](#) for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

USDA Announces New Steps to Enhance Organic Markets and Support Producers

The USDA is taking additional steps as part of its commitment to strengthen the market for domestically grown organic goods, and to support producers seeking organic certification. These funding opportunities are part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Organic Transition Initiative](#), launched in fall 2022, which is a suite of offerings to help existing organic farmers and those transitioning to organic production and processing.



Consumer demand for organically produced goods surpassed \$67 billion in 2022, and multi-year trends of strong growth in the sector provide market incentives for U.S. farmers across a broad range of products. However, through public comment and listening sessions USDA has heard that producers may be less willing to commit to the three-year transition to organic certification because of risks related to inadequate organic processing, storage, and handling capacity, cost barriers due to limited markets for rotational crops, a lack of certainty about market access, and insufficient supply of certain organic ingredients. The organic livestock and processed product markets depend heavily on imported agricultural products for feed grains and key ingredients. These are longstanding market issues that were brought into sharp focus due to the impacts of the pandemic and international conflicts in critical overseas organic supply regions, resulting in limitations on certain domestic organic products in the face of rising demand.

Cost Share for Organic Certification

As part of USDA's broader effort to support organic producers and in response to stakeholder feedback, this year the Farm Service Agency increased the cost share amount under the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), which helps organic producers cover organic certification costs, to the maximum amount allowed by statute.

Specifically, FSA will cover up to 75% of costs associated with organic certification, up to \$750 for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling and state organic program fees (California only). OCCSP will cover costs incurred from Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2023.

FSA began accepting applications for OCCSP Monday, May 15. Applications are due Oct. 31, 2023. To apply, producers and handlers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#). As part of completing the OCCSP application, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses. Organic producers and handlers may also apply for OCCSP through participating state departments of agriculture.

FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA will post a synopsis of the funding opportunity on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and will send more information to all eligible state departments of agriculture. Additional details can be found on the [OCCSP webpage](#). More information about these initiatives and more can be found at farmers.gov/organic-transition-initiative.

Avoid Scams Related to USDA Financial Assistance for Farmers Facing Discrimination

The Inflation Reduction Act provides \$2.2 billion in financial assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs prior to January 1, 2021.

USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about this process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information.

Application forms for this program **are not yet available** and the **application filing period has not started**. Before the application process opens, USDA will publish a list of trusted community organizations located across the country that will provide **FREE** help completing applications.

Please beware of organizations seeking to file your application for a fee. Filing an application for the program will be **FREE**. You **will not** need a lawyer to file an application for this program. If you feel the need for legal advice, seek the assistance of a trusted, licensed attorney.

Beware of solicitations by mail, email, or phone calls from individuals claiming to be connected to USDA. **USDA will not solicit you for information.**

The most up-to-date information on this program will be posted at www.farmers.gov/22007, a USDA website. Please check there for any concerns or reach out to your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

If you believe there is an organization conducting a scam related to this process, please contact the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) or any other appropriate authorities. The USDA OIG hotline can be accessed online at <https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/hotline> and by phone at (800) 424-9121.

USDA Offers Kentucky Producers Many Conservation Choices with Continuous CRP

Agricultural producers and landowners in Kentucky interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments can find many possibilities through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). This option offers conservation benefits similar to others, like General and Grassland CRP, but also offers unique flexibility and several program choices.



“Creating sound conservation and climate-smart options for the agricultural community are top priorities for us,” said Dean Schamore, State Executive Director for USDA’s Farm Service Agency in Kentucky. “Continuous CRP is one of the best ways we can do that because it offers so many options. Producers across the country are currently participating in Continuous CRP with more than 8.2 million acres enrolled, proving that agriculture and conservation can be strong partners.”

The long-term goal of all CRP opportunities is to re-establish valuable land cover—helping to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality in exchange for a yearly rental payment.

Under Continuous CRP, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is also available in the Continuous signup.

There are several enrollment options within [Continuous CRP](#), including:

- [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#)
 - The initiative restores vital habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife conservation goals.
- [Highly Erodible Lands Initiative \(HELI\)](#)
 - Producers and landowners can enroll in CRP to establish long-term cover on highly erodible cropland that has a weighted erodibility index (EI) greater than or equal to 20.
- [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#)
 - Working with conservation partners, CREP leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific state, regional, or nationally significant conservation concerns.
- [Farmable Wetlands Program](#)
 - Producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, improving both vegetation and water flow.

USDA continues to improve conservation programs by looking for opportunities to broaden reach and accessibility for producers and landowners. The Department has enhanced Continuous CRP by expanding CLEAR30 from two pilot areas to nationwide availability and repositioning SAFE within Continuous CRP to give producers and landowners more opportunities to participate. In addition, the Department has improved CREP by creating flexibilities within CREP for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind

contributions, or technical assistance, adding staff to work directly with partners, and partnering with three Tribal Nations, for the first time ever, to help conserve, maintain, and improve grassland productivity while reducing soil erosion and enhancing wildlife habitat.

To sign up, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Equity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating its farm loan programs to better support current borrowers, including historically underserved producers. These improvements are part of USDA's commitment to increase equity in all programs, including farm loans that provide important access to capital for covering operating expenses and purchasing land and equipment.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized FSA to provide equitable relief to certain direct loan borrowers, who are non-compliant with program requirements due to good faith reliance on a material action of, advice of, or non-action from an FSA official. Previously, borrowers may have been required to immediately repay the loan or convert it to a non-program loan with higher interest rates, less favorable terms, and limited loan servicing.

Now, FSA has additional flexibilities to assist borrowers in such situations. If the agency provided incorrect guidance to an existing direct loan borrower, the agency may provide equitable relief to that borrower. FSA may assist the borrower by allowing the borrower to keep their loans at current rates or other terms received in association with the loan which was determined to be noncompliant or the borrower may receive other equitable relief for the loan as the Agency determines to be appropriate.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local loan officials to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available that can assist them in starting, expanding or maintaining their operation.

Additional Updates

Equitable relief is one of several changes authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill that USDA has made to the direct and guaranteed loan programs. Other changes that were previously implemented include:

- Modifying the existing three-year farming experience requirement for Direct Farm Ownership loans to include additional items as acceptable experience.
- Allowing socially disadvantaged and beginning farmer applicants to receive a guarantee equal to 95%, rather than the otherwise applicable 90% guarantee.
- Expanding the definition of and providing additional benefits to veteran farmers.
- Allowing borrowers who received restructuring with a write down to maintain eligibility for an Emergency loan.
- Expanding the scope of eligible issues and persons covered under the agricultural Certified Mediation Program.

Additional information on these changes is available in the March 8, 2022 [rule on the Federal Register](#).

More Background

FSA has taken other recent steps to increase equity in its programs. Last summer, USDA announced it was providing \$67 million in competitive loans through its new Heirs' Property Relending Program to help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues. FSA also invested \$4.7 million to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers, which contributed to a fourfold increase in participation by historically underserved producers in the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2), a key pandemic assistance program, since April 2021.

Additionally, in January 2021, Secretary Vilsack announced a [temporary suspension of past-due debt collection and foreclosures](#) for distressed direct loan borrowers due to the economic hardship imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Producers can explore available loan options using the [Farm Loan Discovery Tool on farmers.gov](#) (also available in Spanish) or by contacting their local [USDA Service Center](#). Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Due to the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Producers can [contact their local Service Center](#) to set up an in-person or phone appointment to discuss loan options.

Farmers.gov Feature Helps Producers Find Farm Loans that Fit Their Operation

Farmers and ranchers can use the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* on farmers.gov to find information on USDA farm loans that may best fit their operations.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of loan options to help farmers finance their operations. From buying land to financing the purchase of equipment, FSA loans can help.



USDA conducted field research in eight states, gathering input from farmers and FSA farm loan staff to better understand their needs and challenges.

How the Tool Works

Farmers who are looking for financing options to operate a farm or buy land can answer a few simple questions about what they are looking to fund and how much money they need to borrow. After submitting their answers, farmers will receive information on farm loans that best fit their specific needs. The loan application and additional resources also will be provided.

Farmers can download application quick guides that outline what to expect from preparing an application to receiving a loan decision. There are four guides that cover loans to individuals, entities, and youth, as well as information on microloans. The guides include general eligibility

requirements and a list of required forms and documentation for each type of loan. These guides can help farmers prepare before their first USDA service center visit with a loan officer.

Farmers can access the *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* by visiting farmers.gov/fund and clicking the “Start” button. Follow the prompts and answer five simple questions to receive loan information that is applicable to your agricultural operation. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

About Farmers.gov

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where farmers will be able to apply for programs, process transactions, and manage accounts.

The *Farm Loan Discovery Tool* is one of many resources on farmers.gov to help connect farmers to information that can help their operations. Earlier this year, USDA launched the *My Financial Information* feature, which enables farmers to view their loan information, history, payments, and alerts by logging into the website.

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. In addition to the interactive farm loan features, the site also offers a Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool. Farmers can visit farmers.gov/recover/disaster-assistance-tool#step-1 to find disaster assistance programs that can help their operation recover from natural disasters.

For more information, contact FSA at your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit farmers.gov.

USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

USDA is seeking nominations for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations will be open to public from May 15, 2023, to July 15, 2023. The 12-member Committee, which first convened in March 2022, is part of USDA’s efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

Members of the Committee include agricultural producers and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing. The Committee last met in April 2023.

Nominations

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise. Four positions are open for nominations including:

- One individual representing urban agriculture.
- One individual representing an institution of higher education or extension program.

- One individual representing business and economic development, which may include a business development entity, community development initiatives, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.
- One individual representing related experience in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership must submit a nomination package including the following:

- A completed background disclosure form (Form AD-755) signed by the nominee; <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-755.pdf>.
- A brief summary explaining the nominee's interest in one or more open vacancies including any unique qualifications that address the membership composition and criteria described above.
- A resume providing the nominee's background, experience, and educational qualifications.
- Recent publications by the nominee relative to extending support for urban agriculture or innovative production (optional).
- Letter(s) of endorsement (optional).

Nomination packages must be submitted by email to UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov or postmarked by July 15, 2023. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4627-S, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations. For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov.

[Additional details are available in the Federal Register notice.](#)

2023 Kentucky Women in Agriculture (KWIA) College Scholarship - Deadline June 30, 2023

The Kentucky Women in Agriculture (KWIA) organization offers a scholarship for women who are full-time students entering their junior year in college through graduate school. Read more about the scholarship application and criteria here:

<https://www.kywomeninag.com/collegescholarship>

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- See our [2023 Kentucky Guaranteed Lender Newsletter](#)
 - See our [USDA Farm Service Agency Annual Program and Policy Reminders - March 2023](#).
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June 2023 Selected Interest Rates

Farm Loan Programs	
90-Day Treasury Bill	5.000%
Farm Operating Loans - Direct	4.500%
Farm Ownership Loans - Direct	4.7500%
Limited Resource Loans	5.000%
Farm Ownership Loans - Direct FO Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.750%

Farm Programs Farm Storage Facility Loans	
3 Year	3.750%
5 Year	3.500%
7 Year	3.500%
10 Year	3.500%
12 Year	3.625%
Commodity Loans	5.750%
CCC Borrowing Rate	4.750%

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[Visit State Webpage](#)

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Contact [your local USDA Service Center](#).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).