



Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Message from Kentucky FSA State Executive Director Dean Schamore



We know how busy farming is and we appreciate those of you who've reached out to your local FSA office, allowing us to assist you with the various types of loans, conservation programs, and insurance programs that support the time and hard work you put into farming.

In an effort to further accommodate your business needs, FSA offices now have new customer kiosks to allow you access online tools and streamline your visit through self-service options. These kiosks can be safely and securely used during your visit to help you with business needs such as signing FSA documents, utilizing the Loan Assistance Tool, accessing necessary personal information such as email, bank accounts or farm records, and signing up for a Login.gov account - which will provide access to farmers.gov level-two features and other USDA and U.S. Government web resources. Your data is protected when using the kiosks through customer specific sessions that will either timeout after use

or can be manually ended to delete all your personal information from the device and log you out of all accounts.

For more information on the new customer kiosks and how they can add another avenue of assistance at your next visit, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#). These offices can also help you register for a farm number, which is required for USDA programs and assistance. FSA has 64 service centers throughout Kentucky with staff ready to help you manage your farming operation and help guide you through the process of preparing and submitting the required paperwork, with no need to hire a paid preparer.

Also, as a reminder, all nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug.1, 2024, deadline. Whether you're a beginning or established producer, historically underserved producer (minority and women), or a large or small operation, it's very important to participate in these nominations because FSA county committees are your link with USDA to help make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November 2024.

If you have any questions about any of our programs, please don't hesitate to contact our team. The Kentucky Farm Service Agency is here to support your operations. Please be safe out there.

Dean Schamore
State Executive Director for FSA
Kentucky State Office

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](#).

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.

Preauthorized Debit Available for Farm Loan Borrowers

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has implemented pre-authorized debit (PAD) for Farm Loan Program (FLP) borrowers. PAD is a voluntary and alternative method for making weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual payments on loans.

PAD payments are pre-authorized transactions that allow the National Financial and Accounting Operations Center (NFAOC) to electronically collect loan payments from a customer's account at a financial institution.

PAD may be useful if you use nonfarm income from regular wages or salary to make payments on loans or adjustment offers or for payments from seasonal produce stands. PAD can only be established for future payments.

To request PAD, customers, along with their financial institution, must fill out form RD 3550-28. This form has no expiration date, but a separate form RD 3550-28 must be completed for each loan to which payments are to be applied. A fillable

form can be accessed on the USDA Rural Development (RD) website at rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines. Click forms and search for “Form 3550-28.”

If you have a “filter” on the account at your financial institution, you will need to provide the financial institution with the following information: Origination ID: 1220040804, Agency Name: USDA RD DCFO.

PAD is offered by FSA at no cost. Check with your financial institution to discuss any potential cost. Preauthorized debit has no expiration date, but you can cancel at any time by submitting a written request to your local FSA office. If a preauthorized debit agreement receives three payment rejections within a three-month period, the preauthorized debit agreement will be cancelled by FSA. The payment amount and due date of your loan is not affected by a cancellation of preauthorized debit. You are responsible to ensure your full payment is made by the due date.

For more information about PAD, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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

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.

“These awards will largely support small and mid-sized farms to ensure they can hire and retain the workers they need to be competitive in the market, while also lifting up rural communities across the country,” said Dean Schamore, USDA Farm Service Agency State Executive Director for Kentucky. “Farmworkers make an incredibly important contribution to food and agriculture and ensure we have food on our tables every day. Improving working conditions and quality of life for farmworkers, both U.S. based workers and those that come to our country to work, is one key step in building a stronger, more resilient food supply chain. The Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program demonstrates the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to supporting employers and farmworkers alike.”

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](#)

Reporting Organic Crops



If you want to use the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) organic price and you select the "organic" option on your NAP application, you must report your crops as organic.

When certifying organic acres, the buffer zone acreage must be included in the organic acreage.

You must also provide a current organic plan, organic certificate or documentation from a certifying agent indicating an organic plan is in effect. Documentation must include:

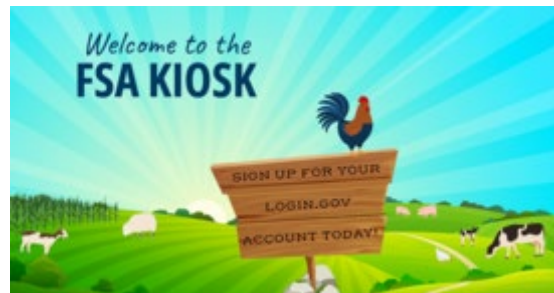
- name of certified individuals
- address
- telephone number
- effective date of certification
- certificate number
- list of commodities certified
- name and address of certifying agent
- a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, including the buffer zone acreage

Certification exemptions are available for producers whose annual gross agricultural income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less. Although exempt growers are not required to provide a written certificate, they are still required to provide a map showing the specific location of each field of certified organic, transitional, and buffer zone acreage.

For questions about reporting organic crops, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

FSA's Customer Kiosks Now Available Nationwide

The new customer kiosks from USDA's Farm Service Agency are now available at every county office nationwide. These kiosks help to streamline your visit to your local county office and easily access a variety of features such as signing FSA documents, utilizing the Loan Assistance Tool, browsing USDA programs, accessing the internet, accessing necessary personal information, and signing up for a Login.gov account, which provides access to farmers.gov level two features and other USDA and U.S. Government web resources. Future kiosk functionality enhancements include a customer check-in application, self-service option for FSA program applications and documents, financial inquiries and more.



Learn more about how FSA is modernizing our customer experience. [Ask the Expert: A Q&A on FSA's New County Office Customer Kiosks with Caleb Gildea | Farmers.gov](#)

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.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to breaking sod, clearing land (tree removal), and of any drainage projects (tiling, ditching, etc.) to ensure compliance. Failure to update certification of compliance, with [form AD-1026](#), triggering applicable HEL and/or wetland determinations, for any of these situations, can result in the loss of FSA farm program payments, FSA farm loans, NRCS program payments, and premium subsidy to Federal Crop Insurance administered by RMA.

Kentucky FSA State Office

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[State Webpage](#)

Contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) for assistance with FSA loans or programs

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Kentucky FSA State Committee

- *John McCauley (Committee Chair) - Lexington*
- *Carrie Divine - Morganfield*
- *Pat Henderson - Irvington*
- *James Kay, Sr. - Versailles*
- *Roger Thomas - Smiths Grove*

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