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The past few years have been tough to say the least. As producers have dealt with the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have also struggled to recover from more frequent, more intense natural disasters. I am grateful that Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43), which includes $10 billion in critical emergency relief.  After extensive stakeholder outreach, including with producers and groups that have not always been included in USDA programs, our team began work developing a responsive, easier-to-access program that could be rolled out in phases. We’re now rolling out the first phase of ERP, which uses existing [Federal Crop Insurance](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Frma.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=M56wamPqQCZ5byPLri26oXpfJXrN7YJr3mP9TXYGFO8%3D&reserved=0) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fdisaster-assistance-program%2Fnoninsured-crop-disaster-assistance%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=NbxFXEu6UfwAEhC7mY0EAH388xGTnQW87%2FRi6SytrqM%3D&reserved=0) (NAP) data as the basis for calculating initial payments.  By leveraging existing data, we will be able to deliver approximately $6 billion in assistance on a faster timeline; at the same time, my team and I are committed to ensuring that producers who do not have existing data on file with USDA are captured in the second phase of ERP, which will be explicitly focused on filling gaps in previously implemented emergency assistance.  To apply for ERP Phase 1, here’s what you need to do:   1. **Check Your Mailbox**   The form being mailed to you includes eligibility requirements, outlines the application process, and provides estimated ERP payment calculations. Producers will receive a separate application form for each program year in which an eligible loss occurred. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP phase one payment. This application takes about 0.176 hours (that’s less than 15 minutes) for producers to complete, compared to the former Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus application which took several hours for producers to complete and even longer for FSA staff.  The deadline to return completed ERP applications to FSA is **Friday, July 22, 2022**. If you have NAP coverage, you will receive pre-filled ERP applications later this summer. Details on ERP Phase 2 will be forthcoming as well.   1. **Check Your Eligibility**   ERP covers losses to crops, trees, bushes, and vines due to a qualifying natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligible crops include all crops for which crop insurance or NAP coverage was available, except for crops intended for grazing. Qualifying natural disaster events include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought\*, and related conditions.  \*Lists of [2020](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2022%2Ffsa_erp_2020_drought_counties_factsheet.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=k6lX2wMKtn3r9DWMzYZ%2BG2ZO2aFOLmvyQaFz14qzM%2F4%3D&reserved=0) and [2021](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2022%2Ffsa_erp_2021_drought_counties_factsheet.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3fGhTdYgDTAZ7DR%2BV9AoZ%2B3PeDUBtgVXONwZe9BKNdM%3D&reserved=0) drought counties eligible for ERP are available online.   1. **Check Required Forms on File with FSA**   **Producers must have the following forms on file with FSA:**   * 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). * 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.   If you have previously participated in FSA programs, you will likely have these required forms on file. However, if you’re uncertain or want to confirm the status of your forms, contact your [local FSA county office](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).   1. **Check Historically Underserved Status with FSA, If Applicable**   The ERP payment percentage for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, and ranchers will be increased by 15% of the calculated ERP payment.  To qualify for the higher payment percentage, eligible producers must have the following form on file with FSA:   * Form CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification.  1. **Check Your Future Insurance Coverage**   All producers who receive ERP phase one payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, for the next two available crop years, as determined by the Secretary.  Coverage requirements will be determined from the date a producer receives an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of crop insurance or NAP for a producer’s particular crops. The final crop year to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage to meet the second year of coverage for this requirement is the 2026 crop year.   1. **Check Your bank**   Once the completed ERP application for payment is submitted to and signed by FSA, producers who have direct deposit should look for payment within three business days.  **More Information**  We have additional resources, including:   * [ERP May 16, 2022 New Release](https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/05/16/usda-provide-approximately-6-billion-commodity-and-specialty-crop?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) * [ERP Fact Sheet](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2022%2Ffsa_erp_factsheet_2022_051222_final_v2.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bTKmFQBHdLdPDRpEuyMASItWumWQa8uOFq5witZbR18%3D&reserved=0) * [Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Femergency-relief%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%23erp&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9asVAgXQdZ7E7itz1xTsezz8vjkT6NyKMT4bKwEs8jw%3D&reserved=0) * [Emergency Relief Webpage](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Femergency-relief%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1tYg1%2F6M7v%2Fwg6D27Xp4UAg39oYJhvk9PCfqf4x0%2Fk0%3D&reserved=0) * [ERP Notice of Funding Availability](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FInternet%2FFSA_Federal_Notices%2Ferp_nofa.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bKXO4f7vpyMkzoKIymRbSyrGdu77yG%2Bi0WHAJqbfZco%3D&reserved=0)   In addition to ERP, FSA is also implementing the first phase of the new Emergency Livestock Relief Program. At this time, FSA has made more than $588 million in payments to impacted livestock producers.  Bottom line, we take your feedback seriously, and we wanted to deliver this relief as soon as possible. We learned from previous relief programs, and we’re excited to be getting this to you as swiftly as we can. USDA to Allow Producers to Request Voluntary Termination of Conservation Reserve Program Contract The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will allow Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants who are in the final year of their CRP contract to request voluntary termination of their CRP contract following the end of the primary nesting season for fiscal year 2022. Participants approved for this one-time, voluntary termination will not have to repay rental payments, a flexibility implemented this year to help mitigate the global food supply challenges caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and other factors. Today, USDA also announced additional flexibilities for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).  FSA is [mailing letters to producers](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FConservation%2FPDF%2Fexpiring-crp-letter-dafp-signed.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=evEWxwBA9PYoZNLq%2BMLsjYCfUpvqkIIMgSs2J4uOwIE%3D&reserved=0) with expiring acres that detail this flexibility and share other options, such as re-enrolling sensitive acres in the CRP Continuous signup and considering growing organic crops. Producers will be asked to make the request for voluntary termination in writing through their local USDA [Service Center](http://www.farmers.gov/service-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).  If approved for voluntary termination, preparations can occur after the conclusion of the [primary nesting season](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FConservation%2FPDF%2Fprimary_nesting_seasons_5_23_2022.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2F6mnSUsbGkmEFDsSMUOIdkrF2Jb%2BpVBFcoO%2FarQHS3U%3D&reserved=0). Producers will then be able to hay, graze, begin land preparation activities and plant a fall-seeded crop before October 1, 2022. For land in colder climates, this flexibility may allow for better establishment of a winter wheat crop or better prepare the land for spring planting.  **Organic Considerations**  Since CRP land typically does not have a recent history of pesticide or herbicide application, USDA is encouraging producers to consider organic production. USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides [technical and financial assistance](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nrcs.usda.gov%2Fwps%2Fportal%2Fnrcs%2Fmain%2Fnational%2Forganic%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=45nGrLpKNcEqV1HNvYeIY1w%2BeCGsdyd%2Fuux6NBC3WgU%3D&reserved=0) to help producers plan and implement conservation practices, including those that work well for organic operations, such as pest management and mulching. Meanwhile, FSA offers [cost-share for certification costs](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fnews-room%2Fnews-releases%2F2022%2Fusda-accepting-applications-to-help-cover-costs-of-organic-transitioning-producers%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kXEZoIWJCqp5OyrFR7%2F0eGzRb8RyXloZFodAHAO0Qow%3D&reserved=0) and other fees.  **Other CRP Options**  Participants can also choose to enroll all or part of their expiring acres into the Continuous CRP signup for 2022. Important conservation benefits may still be achieved by re-enrolling sensitive acres such as buffers or wetlands. Expiring water quality practices such as filter strips, grass waterways, and riparian buffers may be eligible to be reenrolled under the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) and CLEAR 30 options under CRP. Additionally, expiring continuous CRP practices such as shelterbelts, field windbreaks, and other buffer practices may also be re-enrolled to provide benefits for organic farming operations.  If producers are not planning to farm the land from their expiring CRP contract, the Transition Incentives Program (TIP) may also provide them two additional annual rental payments after their contract expires on the condition that they sell or rent their land to a beginning or veteran farmer or rancher or a member of a socially disadvantaged group.  Producers interested in the Continuous CRP signup, CLEAR 30, or TIP should contact FSA by Aug. 5, 2022.  **NRCS Conservation Programs**  USDA also encourages producers to consider NRCS conservation programs, which help producers integrate conservation on croplands, grazing lands and other agricultural landscapes. EQIP and CSP can help producers plant cover crops, manage nutrients and improve irrigation and grazing systems. Additionally, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), or state or private easement programs, may be such an option. In many cases, a combination of approaches can be taken on the same parcel.  For example, riparian areas or other sensitive parts of a parcel may be enrolled in continuous CRP and the remaining land that is returned to farming can participate in CSP or EQIP and may be eligible to receive additional ranking points.  **Other Flexibilities to Support Conservation**  Additionally, NRCS is also offering a new flexibility for EQIP and CSP participants who have cover cropping including in their existing contracts. NRCS will allow participants to either modify their plans to plant a cover crop (and instead shift to a conservation crop rotation) or delay their cover crop plans a year, without needing to terminate the existing contract. This will allow for flexibility to respond to market signals while still ensuring the conservation benefits through NRCS financial and technical assistance for participating producers.  **More Information**  Producers and landowners can learn more about these options by contacting FSA and NRCS at their local [USDA Service Center](http://www.farmers.gov/service-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)  |  | | --- | | FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)  If you’ve suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).  For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:   * the transportation of water to livestock; * the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock, * the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.\*   \*Hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for “empty miles.”  Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.  **WATER TRANSPORTATION**  For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.  **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED**  ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year. **ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING LIVESTOCK TO FORAGE/GRAZING ACRES**  ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. **For those interested in this provision for 2021, the deadline to apply for assistance is June 30, 2022. Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.**  For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.  ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more information regarding ELAP, contact your local Parish County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/disaster](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fdisaster%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2F4QASLEDLMaeT12udwBuU00GU3MiMMQIV9HUntDeiQ4%3D&reserved=0). |  USDA Renews People’s Garden Initiative Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently planted a tree to announce the reopening of the USDA’s People’s Garden Initiative. People’s Gardens across the country will grow fresh, healthy food and support resilient, local food systems; teach people how to garden using conservation practices; nurture habitat for pollinators and wildlife and create greenspace for neighbors. The garden at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. will be joined by 17 flagship gardens located in urban communities nationwide.  The Washington, D.C. People’s Garden is growing plants in a variety of ways, from small containers to wheelchair accessible raised beds. Active beehives are on the rooftop of the USDA Whitten Building. In early spring, cool weather crops like peas, kale, collards, radishes, cilantro, parsley, carrots, lettuces, beets, chard and spinach are planted, followed by warm weather crops like beans, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, and pumpkins in late spring and early summer. Conservation practices like cover crops and pollinator plantings are being used to conserve natural resources.      Meanwhile, USDA has plans to launch flagship gardens in urban communities. Those cities include:   * Albuquerque, N.M. * Atlanta, Ga. * Chicago, Ill. * Cleveland, Ohio * Dallas, Texas * Detroit, Mich. * Grand Rapids, Mich. * Los Angeles, Calif. * Minneapolis, Minn. * New Orleans, La. * New York, N.Y. * Oakland, Calif. * Philadelphia, Pa. * Phoenix, Ariz. * Portland, Ore. * Richmond, Va. * St. Louis, Mo.   USDA plans to expand the initiative to other communities later this year.     School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural and urban areas can be recognized as a “People’s Garden” if they:   * Benefit the community by providing food, green space, wildlife habitat, education space. * Are a collaborative effort. This can include groups working together with USDA agencies, food banks, Girl Scouts, Master Gardeners, conservation districts, etc. * Incorporate conservation management practices, such as using native plant species, rain barrels, integrated pest management, xeriscaping. * Educate the public about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of local, diverse, and resilient food systems providing healthy food for the community.   USDA originally launched the People’s Garden Initiative in 2009. It’s named for the “People’s Department,” former President Abraham Lincoln’s nickname for USDA, which was established during his presidency in 1862. To watch these gardens grow, visit our [People’s Garden Webpage](https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)or follow the hashtag #PeoplesGarden on USDA’s social media channels. USDA Advances Food System Transformation with $43 Million for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Adds New Urban County Committees  |  | | --- | | Funding is First Part of $75 Million Investment to Support a Fairer Food System and Expand Access to Nutritious Food.  The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces significant investments to support urban agriculture, including $43.1 million for grants and cooperative agreements as well as six new urban county committees to help deliver key USDA programs to urban producers. These actions support USDA’s efforts to strengthen the food supply chain and transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient. Specifically, USDA is investing $10.2 million in new cooperative agreements to expand compost and food waste reduction efforts and $14.2 million in new grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. Additionally, $18.7 million will fund 75 worthy grant proposals from the 2021 application cycle, which was oversubscribed.  Learn more [<link to release>.](https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/06/03/usda-advances-food-system-transformation-43-million-urban?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) |  USDA Offers Water Quality-Focused Program That Builds on CRP Contracts  |  | | --- | | The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing the signup period for its Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers initiative (CLEAR30) — a nationwide opportunity for certain landowners and agricultural producers currently implementing water quality practices through the [Conservation Reserve Program](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fconservation-programs%2Fconservation-reserve-program%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=PKIKHub1VbTLrktX56398sFkO0pjSEDGbP5rY0rZdq8%3D&reserved=0) (CRP) to enroll in 30-year contracts, extending the lifespan and strengthening the benefits of important water quality practices on their land.  Producers may apply for CLEAR30, a voluntary, incentive-based conservation program, **from April 1, 2022, through Aug. 5, 2022**.  Cropland and certain pastureland currently enrolled in Continuous CRP or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and dedicated to an eligible water quality practice such as riparian buffers, contour strips, grass waterways or wetland restoration may be eligible if their contracts are expiring by September 30, 2022.  CLEAR30 contracts will be effective beginning Oct. 1, 2022. These long-term contracts ensure that conservation practices remain in place for 30 years, which improves water quality through reducing sediment and nutrient runoff and helping prevent algal blooms. Conservation in riparian areas also provides important carbon sequestration benefits. Traditional CRP contracts run from 10 to 15 years.  **About CLEAR30**  CLEAR30 was established in the 2018 Farm Bill to better address water quality concerns. Originally, CLEAR30 was only available in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watersheds; in 2021, FSA made CLEAR30 available to agricultural producers and landowners nationwide, and participation grew nearly seven-fold from 2020 to 2021.  Annual rental payments for landowners who enroll in CLEAR30 will be equal to the current Continuous CRP annual payment rate plus a **20** percent water quality incentive payment and an annual rental rate adjustment of **27.5** percent.  **How to Sign Up**  To sign up for CLEAR30, landowners and producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) by **Aug. 5, 2022**.  Contact information can be found at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fconservation-programs%2Fconservation-reserve-program%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=PKIKHub1VbTLrktX56398sFkO0pjSEDGbP5rY0rZdq8%3D&reserved=0).  **More Information**  CLEAR30 is an option available through CRP, which is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. CRP was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and stabilize commodity prices by taking environmentally sensitive lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing numerous conservation and economic benefits. In addition to CLEAR30, signups are also open for [Continuous CRP](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2Fcrp-continuous-enrollment-period-factsheet.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Uj88QvBbZ97jr6PoAf3yCHH6eCZ7SVoUfjS90l59zk4%3D&reserved=0) and [Grassland CRP](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2Ffsa_crpgrasslands_workinglandsfactsheet_21.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kxj2yhAhWh9gW6d1dq7nhFOx44KChUGF0%2BVrHHPoSDc%3D&reserved=0). |  Progression Lending from FSA  |  | | --- | | Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans are considered progression lending. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Our goal is to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.  The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. FSA staff will advise borrowers on developing strategies and a plan to meet your goals and graduate to commercial credit. FSA borrowers are responsible for the success of their farming operation, but FSA staff will help in an advisory role, providing the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.  For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local Parish USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0tKPWHW1VU1XN0%2B%2B5X7m5vEbZRoVZO3KTh7BUJz8PIs%3D&reserved=0). |  USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers **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](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rd.usda.gov%2Fpage%2Fregulations-and-guidance%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=D8KZ%2F2gor%2BDYXGvERXXTnQm%2FAnCn8qo8clmyT7QWmL8%3D&reserved=0). 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 County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0tKPWHW1VU1XN0%2B%2B5X7m5vEbZRoVZO3KTh7BUJz8PIs%3D&reserved=0). Current Interest Rates for June  * [Commodity Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fprice-support%2Fcommodity-loans%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=s%2BfCqLlHmufl2hrLlQbvh%2BozTvOnwVgz7kcWe9wT%2Bng%3D&reserved=0) (less than one year disbursed): 3.000 % * [Farm Storage Facility Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fprice-support%2Ffacility-loans%2Ffarm-storage%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4XeME8dYuioTSgM1heFFusoNjtXuikG1xvEBLp0B6SY%3D&reserved=0):                  Three-year loan terms: 2..875%                 Five-year loan terms: 2..875%                 Seven-year loan terms: 3.000 %                 Ten-year loan terms: 2..875%                 Twelve-year loan terms: 3.000 %   * [Sugar Storage Facility Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Fprice-support%2Ffacility-loans%2Fsugar-storage%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=J2j4Q41fu5blM%2B3v%2B2msqDa11zoXElTE0kUOIBtzENM%3D&reserved=0) (15 years): 3.125% * [Farm Operating Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Ffarm-loan-programs%2Ffarm-operating-loans%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9YWY0vpQ4kWXKNBAe8Lb47eKtZ3f6WkcAX8KeHRlvLU%3D&reserved=0) (Direct): 3.625% * [Farm Ownership Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Ffarm-loan-programs%2Ffarm-ownership-loans%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=JAfYAlm8lpq0SFUUnSKWz0LUUQg8nS3m9I7YWMczSmE%3D&reserved=0) (Direct): 2.500% * [Farm Ownership Loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Ffarm-loan-programs%2Ffarm-ownership-loans%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=JAfYAlm8lpq0SFUUnSKWz0LUUQg8nS3m9I7YWMczSmE%3D&reserved=0) (Down Payment): 1.500% * [Emergency Loan](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Ffarm-loan-programs%2Femergency-farm-loans%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1c6d9d5c5ef940564ed608da4952a6f6%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637902916595429712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=n8Feesj3IytOEEbJat8BuWVoLTNVcuiGDOnjwvktuUI%3D&reserved=0) (Amount of Actual Loss): 3.750%  Important Dates June 15-  County Election/ Urban COC Election Nominations Begins  June 30-- The last day to sign up for the 2022 Ag Census  July 15-    Acreage reporting deadline for most spring seeded crops.  Aug. 1–    Deadline to request Farm reconstitutions  Aug. 1 -    Last day to file County Committee nomination forms at your local USDA                  Service Center  Aug. 2 –   Last Day to file nomination forms for COC Election at the Local USDA                  Service Center  Aug.  5 –  Producers may apply for CLEAR30 through August 5, 2022  Sept. 30-  Last day to certify 2023 Crawfish  Oct.   31-  Deadline to apply for Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)  Oct.   31-  Deadline to apply for Organic and Transitional Education and Certification                  Program (OTECP)  Nov. 15 -  Last day to certify Ryegrass  Dec. 15 -  Last day to certify Fall seeded small grains  FSA now offers SMS texting; receive text message alerts on your cell phone regarding important deadlines, reporting requirements and updates. Call your local Service Center to schedule an appointment. You can find contact information at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). |
|  |
| Louisiana FSA State Office 3737 Government Street Alexandria, LA 70508  Phone: 318-473-7721 Fax: 1-844-325-6942   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Christine Normand** Acting State Executive Director Administrative Officer [christine.normand@usda.gov](mailto:christine.normand@usda.gov) | **Terrick Boley** Farm Loan Program Chief [terrick.boley@usda.gov](mailto:terrick.boley@usda.gov) | | **DeWanna Pitman** Farm Program Chief [dewanna.pitman@usda.gov](mailto:dewanna.pitman@usda.gov) |  | |  |  | |  |  | |