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USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to issue payments to underserved producers who participated in CFAP 2 and are certified as underserved producers.  Producers without form CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification, on file can submit by **March 31, 2023,** to receive the top-up payment. This is an extension from the Feb. 10, 2023, deadline. Contact your local [USDA Service Center](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) for more information.  The top-up payment is part of a broader effort by the Biden-Harris administration to better reach agricultural producers and industries impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions by providing a holistic, inclusive approach to pandemic assistance. USDA Announces Signup for Crop and Revenue Loss Assistance for Agricultural Producers Signup begiun January 23 for additional emergency relief from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the [Emergency Relief Program](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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799377830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=WMcnNK6qSUGWFmG%2B1oiufV8sW%2B9YIRszMzapEeqlZ7M%3D&reserved=0) (ERP) Phase Two.  To be eligible for 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. Eligible crops include both traditional insurable commodities and specialty crops that are produced in the United States as part of a farming operation and are intended to be commercially marketed. This also includes losses of eligible on-farm stored commodities. ERP Phase 2 applicants will use the following tax years when selecting allowable gross revenue:   * Benchmark years: 2018 and/or 2019; estimated for new producers with no 2018 or 2019 revenue or adjusted if the benchmark years are not representative of the disaster year due to a change in operation size. * Disaster years: 2020 and/or 2021. The allowable gross revenue for the specific disaster year will be based on the tax year applicable to that revenue (2020, 2021 or 2022).   The ERP tool assists producers in calculating allowable gross revenue, as well as adjusted revenue for the benchmark years 2018 and 2019, and allowable gross revenue for representative tax years 2020-2022 which represent disaster years 2020 and 2021. Once producers complete the allowable gross revenue entries, they are able to print forms FSA-521 and FSA-521A through this tool.  The ERP Phase 2 and PARP application period is open from January 23 through June 2 2023.  For more information on payment calculations, payment limitations or how to determine allowable gross revenue, please reference the [ERP Phase 2 fact sheet.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2FAssets%2FUSDA-FSA-Public%2Fusdafiles%2FFactSheets%2F2023%2Ffsa_erp_factsheet_22_update_011823.pdf%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799377830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vJpMHo2pH83QS89czWRjfc9aj3rjvepoFPvoL4onJ3o%3D&reserved=0) USDA Announces General Conservation Reserve Program Signups for 2023 Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin applying for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup starting **February 27 through April 7, 2023.** CRP is a cornerstone voluntary conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool in the Biden-Harris administration’s effort to address climate change and help agricultural communities invest in the long-term well-being of their land and natural resources.  Producers and landowners enrolled more than 5 million acres into CRP through signups in 2022, building on the acceptance of more than 3.1 million acres in the [largest Grassland CRP signup in history](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fnews-room%2Fnews-releases%2F2022%2Fusda-accepts-more-than-3-1-million-acres-in-grassland-crp-signup%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799377830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jvGB%2FGBVoGeeADI5%2FVPJJpVnG28Xveal92k%2BBKMv%2FSo%3D&reserved=0). There are currently 23 million acres enrolled in CRP, with 1.9 million set to expire this year. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) is aiming to reach the 27-million-acre cap statutorily set for fiscal year 2023.  **General CRP**  General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.  **Continuous CRP**  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.  FSA offers several additional enrollment opportunities within Continuous CRP, including the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers Initiative (CLEAR30), the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CLEAR30 Initiative, which was originally piloted in twelve states in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watershed, has been expanded nationwide, allowing producers and landowners to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices. Under this administration, FSA also moved SAFE practices back to the Continuous CRP signup, giving producers and landowners more opportunities to participate in the initiative. Through the FWP, producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP as part of their efforts to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, to improve both vegetation and water flow.  This administration has also made significant improvements to CREP, which leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific State, regional or nationally significant conservation concerns. Specifically, USDA made significant improvements to CREP to reduce barriers and make the program more accessible to a broad range of producers and new types of partners.  These updates included flexibility for partners to provide matching funds in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or technical assistance, along with an investment in additional staff to work directly with partners. Through CREP, for the first time ever, three Tribal Nations are now partnering with USDA to help conserve, maintain, and improve grassland productivity, reduce soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat.  **Grassland CRP**  FSA will announce the dates for Grassland CRP signup in the coming weeks. Grassland CRP is a working lands program, helping landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands.  Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.  **How to Sign Up**  Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.  Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.  **More Information**  Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. Applying for Beginning Farmer Loans  |  | | --- | | The Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:   * Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years * Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm * Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA * Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county’s average size farm.   For more information contact, 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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799377830%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=a3ZeTx2tEqXOMS478xAB9ci9ePL3kvWlnwfZwBArjI8%3D&reserved=0). |  USDA Announces Availability of Inflation Reduction Act Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture USDA is making funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices. The [Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nrcs.usda.gov%2Fabout%2Fpriorities%2Finflation-reduction-act%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=fsTk4dDx1bVpD5O%2F94cPUQYe5nww%2BqxtyVt82PytnXE%3D&reserved=0) provided an additional $19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements. NRCS is making available $850 million in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).  The IRA funding includes an additional $8.45 billion for EQIP, $4.95 billion for RCPP, $3.25 billion for CSP, and $1.4 billion for ACEP. The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers apply conservation to millions of acres of land. Additionally, the IRA provides $300 million to quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gases (GHG) through the collection and use of field-based data to assess conservation outcomes. Information gained through this effort will be used to improve practices and technical assistance to customers. Further guidance on this important work will be provided as the implementation of this portion of the IRA continues.  These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. To ensure we can quantify the benefits of these IRA investments, NRCS is working to support Department-wide work on Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MMRV). The IRA provided targeted funding to support this effort. In administering the Inflation Reduction Act climate investments, USDA will also support other environmental co-benefits, including – among other things – water conservation, wildlife habitat improvements, and reducing runoff.  **How to Apply**  NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but producers interested in **EQIP** or **CSP** should apply by [their state’s ranking dates](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nrcs.usda.gov%2Franking-dates%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=txC5czqk%2Bq%2FK%2BVv6GdR33PSV0B5hjq5fjDe8ifq%2Bx0c%3D&reserved=0) to be considered for funding in the current cycle. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.  For **ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)** or **Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE),** applications for the current IRA funding cycle must be submitted by **March 17, 2023**, for the first funding round. This year, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-ALE for grasslands in areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores. Meanwhile, NRCS will prioritize ACEP-WRE for eligible lands that contain soils high in organic carbon.  NRCS plans to roll out the next **RCPP** funding opportunity in early spring, which will include IRA funds from fiscal year 2023.  Other opportunities for agreements and partnerships at the state level will be announced for fiscal year 2023 in the coming months. The IRA provides funding to support those strategic partnerships with local, regional and national organizations. This will include outreach to underserved producers to ensure IRA climate funding is reaching those who have been previously unable to access conservation assistance. Implementing Fire Management on CRP Acres FSA encourages you to be proactive in preventing the spread of wildfire. If you participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), you are responsible for fire management on your CRP acreage. The goal is to suppress the amount of fuel in the event of a wildfire while still promoting the diversity of the conservation cover.  One fire management practice includes installing firebreaks, which should be included in the contract support document and installed according to NRCS firebreak standards. Barren firebreaks will only be allowed in high risk areas, such as transportation corridors, rural communities, and adjacent farmsteads. A conservationist must certify that there will not be an erosion hazard from the barren firebreak. If erosion becomes a problem, remedial action will be taken.  You must complete the necessary management activities outside of the Primary Nesting Season. In Louisiana , the Primary Nesting Season is April 15th through July 15th for all maintenance activities. Remember that fireguard technical practices should be outlined in your Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO). USDA Encourages You to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines  |  | | --- | | The Farm Service Agency encourages you to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.  Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available. You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwebapp.rma.usda.gov%2Fapps%2FActuarialInformationBrowser2018%2FCropCriteria.aspx%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QPyLoNB%2Bw0x6jPfcxY4rexbcZ%2FxtkvSHzP1QaCNaz54%3D&reserved=0).  NAP offers higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the “buy-up” option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.  For all coverage levels, the NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.  Beginning, underserved, veterans and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.  Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. contact your local 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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rwY0V8Lc5%2FLGxDl34hyF79nIofgPW4xbdR%2BfvkDu%2Buc%3D&reserved=0).  Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at [USDA’s online Agent Locator](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fprodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov%2Fapps%2FAgentLocator%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=6YBzr80%2Fe2GlZlHj5V1DhsGZyNBbjCstASCXZQiphbs%3D&reserved=0). You can use the [USDA Cost Estimator](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fewebapp.rma.usda.gov%2Fapps%2Fcostestimator%2FDefault.aspx%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=xHkfAixySFeOgGkXs6MmqeIiSSWvvOS%2BiihSXzM6j98%3D&reserved=0) to predict insurance premium costs. |  USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form were made available March 1, 2023.  Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.  In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting [farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flat.fpac.usda.gov%2F%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=r%2BnIn1RtlDxK7VvCdsueXhlJV1a0cP%2FWF%2BJldEGMTKw%3D&reserved=0) and clicking the ‘Get Started’ button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.  The simplified direct loan application and Loan Assistance Tool are the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:   * An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns. * An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.   USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.  Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%2Fprograms-and-services%2Feconomic-and-policy-analysis%2Fafida%2Findex%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3fRsXghqFucMQ62AMLvKzs9aYttF%2B3gbU7H%2FPJj5ic4%3D&reserved=0) or by contacting their[local USDA Service Center.](https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) USDA Announces Additional Assistance for Distressed Farmers Facing Financial Risk  |  | | --- | | The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that beginning in April it will provide approximately $123 million in additional, automatic financial assistance for qualifying farm loan program borrowers who are facing financial risk, as part of the $3.1 billion to help distressed farm loan borrowers that was provided through Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The announcement builds on financial assistance offered to borrowers through the same program in October 2022.  The IRA directed USDA to expedite assistance to distressed borrowers of direct or guaranteed loans administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) whose operations face financial risk. For example, in the October payments, farmers that were 60 days delinquent due to challenges like natural disasters, the pandemic or other unexpected situations were brought current and had their next installment paid to give them breathing room.  In October 2022, [USDA provided approximately $800 million](https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/10/18/usda-provides-payments-nearly-800-million-assistance-help-keep?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) in initial IRA assistance to more than 11,000 **delinquent direct and guaranteed borrowers** and approximately 2,100 borrowers who had their farms liquidated and still had remaining debt. USDA shared that it would conduct case-by-case reviews of about 1,600 complex cases for potential initial relief payments, including cases of **borrowers in foreclosure or bankruptcy**. These case-by-case reviews are underway.  At the same time in October 2022, USDA announced that it anticipated payments using separate pandemic relief funding totaling roughly $66 million on over 7,000 direct loans to borrowers who used the USDA Farm Service Agency’s **disaster-set-aside** option during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of these payments have been processed and USDA anticipates it will complete all such payments in April 2023.  **New Assistance for Distressed Borrowers**  FSA intends to provide the new round of relief starting in April to additional distressed borrowers. This will include approximately $123 million in automatic financial assistance for qualifying Farm Loan Program (FLP) direct loan borrowers who meet certain criteria. Similar to the automatic payments announced in October 2022, qualifying borrowers will receive an individual letter detailing the assistance as payments are made. Distressed borrowers’ eligibility for these new categories of automatic payments will be determined based on their circumstances as of today. More information about the new categories that make up the $123 million in assistance announced today and the specific amount of assistance a distressed borrower receives can be found described in this fact sheet, [IRA Section 22006: Additional Automatic Payments, Improved Procedures, and Policy Recommendations](https://www.farmers.gov/sites/default/files/documents/farmersgov-factsheet-ira-22006-additional-automatic-payments.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).  To continue to make sure producers are aware of relief potentially available to them, all producers with open FLP loans will receive a letter detailing a new opportunity to receive assistance if they took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their FLP loans, such as taking on more debt, selling property or cashing out retirement accounts. The letter will provide details on eligibility, the specific types of actions that may qualify for assistance, and the process for applying for and providing the documentation to seek that assistance.  These steps are part of a process USDA announced along with the October payments that is focused on assisting borrowers unable to make their next scheduled installment. Earlier this year, all borrowers should have received a letter detailing the process for seeking this type of assistance even before they become delinquent. Borrowers who are within two months of their next installment may seek a cashflow analysis from FSA using a recent balance sheet and operating plan to determine their eligibility.  **Tax Resources**  USDA will continue to work with the Department of Treasury to help borrowers understand the potential tax implications from the receipt of an IRA payment, including that options may be available to potentially avoid or alleviate any tax burden incurred as a result of receiving this financial assistance.  In early April, USDA will send a specific set of revised tax documents, educational materials and resources to borrowers that received assistance in 2022, including a link to a webinar hosted by a group of farm tax experts to provide education on the options available. USDA cannot provide tax advice and encourages borrowers to consult their own tax professional, but FSA is providing educational materials for borrowers to be aware of the options. USDA has tax-related resources available at [farmers.gov/taxes](https://www.farmers.gov/taxes?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).  **Improved Procedures and Policy Recommendations**  FSA is finalizing changes to its policy handbooks to remove unnecessary hurdles, improve loan making and loan servicing and provide more flexibility on how loans are structured to maximize the opportunities for borrowers.  Additional details on those changes can be found in the linked fact sheet and are the start of a broader set of process enhancements. The fact sheet also provides information on the eight, no-cost legislative proposals included in the Fiscal Year 2024 President’s Budget that are designed to improve the borrower experience.  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](https://www.usda.gov/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery). |  Important Dates May 31:   Deadline to apply for 2022 Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL)  June 1:    Status Date for determination of Minor Child and Change in Farming Operation  June 2:   Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase 2 application deadline  June 2:   Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) application deadline  Jul. 17:    Acreage reporting deadline for most spring seeded crops  Aug. 1:    Last day to request a Farm Reconstitution  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). Current Interest Rates for March  * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8szt3E28geosVbyqE%2BUh%2B1yNE6RAuVhlEoNlzc1RAVk%3D&reserved=0) (less than one year disbursed): 5.750% * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BHaOJaRzfATz0DBRGgiDhjCMY2OrLTFd46ZfISKNgy0%3D&reserved=0):   + Three-year loan terms: 4.000%   + Five-year loan terms: 3.750%   + Seven-year loan terms: 3.750%   + Ten-year loan terms: 3.625%   + Twelve-year loan terms: 3.625% * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=BeR%2B0wiGbG2F6%2BhkOGaklWRfJX6RtMgPaqB6kNDEcJc%3D&reserved=0) (15 years): 3.750%   Interest rates for Operating and Ownership loans:   * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799533650%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=f4EC9t5k9g5SE2%2BMJrz0loi2F9WtL9%2Bu32ycM1y1J7g%3D&reserved=0) (Direct): 4.750% * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799689854%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZqIAD%2FQnwSxdN9YHWey0DC%2BU9dZQsUUkaD8xHuioCwY%3D&reserved=0) (Direct): 4.875% * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799689854%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZqIAD%2FQnwSxdN9YHWey0DC%2BU9dZQsUUkaD8xHuioCwY%3D&reserved=0) (Direct, Joint Financing): 2.875% * [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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799689854%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ZqIAD%2FQnwSxdN9YHWey0DC%2BU9dZQsUUkaD8xHuioCwY%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%7Cecb0236265c842d5f2c108db2f880dc8%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C638156033799689854%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=efswUBiNjuqvVd9HSbxxn34ySPXlHUfGAoNZsPMveNs%3D&reserved=0) (Amount of Actual Loss): 3.750 % | |  | | Louisiana FSA State Office 3737 Government Street Alexandria, LA 70508  Phone: 318-473-7721 Fax: 1-844-325-6942   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Ronald C. Guidry, Jr.** State Executive Director [Ronald.Guidry@usda.gov](mailto:Ronald.Guidry@usda.gov) | **Christine Normand** 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) | |  |  | |  |  | | | | | |