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| US Department of Agriculture |
| Maine USDA State Office Newsletter August 2024 |
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| [**Farm Service Agency**](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Ffsa.usda.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F9qnXol8HfbwbreCnsXse21D51uw%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768902939%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2eP7Wt2MszrbwlfBAdX4e%2Fp5W2lEAI4RMHFUex9T4Lg%3D&reserved=0)**|**[**Natural Resources Conservation Service**](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.nrcs.usda.gov%252Fwps%252Fportal%252Fnrcs%252Fsite%252Fnational%252Fhome%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FsD71-wfx_tjxvicFy4LU5VrKwTI%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768910354%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=EZPVb%2B2eFH2sSN5Td6n%2B%2Fsq1RgjFqddPeJpSKOb28Xc%3D&reserved=0)**|**[**Risk Management Agency**](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Frma.usda.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FGDn5fFoYsSBX0yuIyZvOCljF4RQ%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768916159%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2B05eVLsmS5kKdjvWOVPCZijw94iH1k0iJjqZreQsyLY%3D&reserved=0) |
| In This Issue:  * [Dates to Remember](#link_7) * [The Maine Message](#link_5) * [USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Financial Freedom, Resilience and Profitability for Agricultural Producers](#link_6) * [FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy](#link_1) * [FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans](#link_10) * [USDA Accepts Nearly 2.2 Million Acres through this year’s Grassland, General, and Continuous CRP signups](#link_12) * [Ask The Expert: A Q&A with Dr. Julie Gauthier about Avian Influenza, Dairy Cows, and the Importance of Testing](#link_8) * [FSA Offers Safety Net Programs for Honeybee Producers](#link_3) * [FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options](#link_9) * [USDA Now Accepting Applications for Available Funds to Help Cover Organic Certification Costs](#link_4) * [USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online](#link_2)  |  | | --- | |  |  Dates to Remember  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Sept 2** | **All Offices Closed for Labor Day** | | **Sept 30** | **Deadline to Purchase NAP for value loss crops and perennial forage** | | **Oct 31** | **Acreage and Inventory Reporting Deadline for all value loss crops except Nursery Production** | | **Oct 31** | **Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) Deadline** |      |  | | --- | |  |  The Maine Message  |  | | --- | | During the last week of July, FSA staff, stakeholders, partners and USDA program beneficiaries had the opportunity to meet with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack at events held at the University of Maine in Orono and in Brunswick.  As part of the Investing in America tour, Secretary Vilsack discussed efforts by the Biden-Harris Administration to create additional income opportunities for producers and entrepreneurs by building more, new, and better markets; providing more options for consumers to buy healthy, locally produced products; investing in infrastructure and creating new jobs; and strengthening local and regional supply chains in the state and across the country.  Program beneficiaries had the opportunity to give examples on how USDA has helped their business/operation as well as where there is room for improvement in a program design, delivery, or implementation.  We are always honored to host the Secretary and demonstrate the impact USDA/FSA programs have made in Maine.  On August 7, 2024, Secretary Vilsack announced the **Enhancing Program Access and Delivery Farm Loans Rule**. This is the most significant change in Farm Service Agency farm loan policy in 40 years. The process of applying for a farm loan has been streamlined and FSA access and delivery rule has been updated to promote producer profitability and resilience.  All changes go in to affect on September 25, 2024.  Please click on the below links for additional  information: [https://www.farmers.gov/blog/its-new-day-farm-financing](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fblog%252Fits-new-day-farm-financing%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FIJXsGplyxaWCFKs5z7RdoSMAf60%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768921943%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=xF5GO0uUqdwOXIrA0HOYbU3CiR4XdtYR3ZaUHX%2FdFZM%3D&reserved=0)  [Enhancing Program Access Fact Sheet](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252FAssets%252FUSDA-FSA-Public%252Fusdafiles%252FFarm-Loan-Programs%252Fpdfs%252Fenhancing-program-access%252Ffact_sheet-farm_loan_rule.pdf%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FRnH5d-WYY1h-OIyL1TkxeiS6pxg%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768927716%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Oq4C0iFSolQi3wDWgGUNcXgtOTAD%2F4Mhi5NXPdors8k%3D&reserved=0)  Aquaculture producers, if you have not heard, please note that brown algae (kelp) is NOW an eligible commodity under our Non-Insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).  Deadline to file your application for coverage is September 30, 2024.  Please contact your local FSA office for further information.  Over the next few months, FSA will have a strong presence at local fairs to include the Blue Hill Fair, Oxford Fair, Farmington Fair, Common Ground Fair and Fryeburg Fair.  Please take a few minutes to stop by and introduce yourself and meet our staff!  As always, please reach out with any questions and concerns. |   Sherry Hamel SED Signature       Sherry Hamel, SED   |  | | --- | |  |  USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Financial Freedom, Resilience and Profitability for Agricultural Producers The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announces changes to the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Farm Loan Programs, effective Sept. 25, 2024 — changes that are intended to increase opportunities for farmers and ranchers to be financially viable. These improvements, part of the [Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.federalregister.gov%252Fpublic-inspection%252F2024-16828%252Fenhancing-program-access-and-delivery-for-farm-loans%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Ft95dM1rfcvCxecRMfphSlWOwc54%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768933600%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=RrYdEIyOAF6skP8jutNxb8W2qKV3TggnyUc2lVNFGsg%3D&reserved=0), demonstrate USDA’s commitment to improving farm profitability through farm loans designed to provide important financing options used by producers to cover operating expenses and purchase land and equipment.  Farm loan policy changes outlined in the Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule, are designed to better assist borrowers to make strategic investments in the enhancement or expansion of their agricultural operations.  The three most notable policy changes include:   * Establishing a new low-interest installment set-aside program for financially distressed borrowers. Eligible financially distressed borrowers can defer up to one annual loan installment per qualified loan at a reduced interest rate, providing a simpler and expedited option to resolve financial distress in addition to FSA’s existing loan servicing programs. * Providing all eligible loan applicants access to flexible repayment terms that can increase profitability and help build working capital reserves and savings. By creating upfront positive cash flow, borrowers can find opportunities in their farm operating plan budgets to include a reasonable margin for increased working capital reserves and savings, including for retirement and education. * Reducing additional loan security requirements to enable borrowers to leverage equity. This reduces the amount of additional security required for direct farm loans, including reducing the frequency borrowers must use their personal residence as additional collateral for a farm loan.   **Additional Farm Loan Program Improvements**  Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA’s FSA has embarked on a comprehensive and systemic effort to ensure equitable delivery of Farm Loan Programs and improve access to credit for small and mid-size family farms. FSA has also included additional data in its [annual report to Congress](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252FAssets%252FUSDA-FSA-Public%252Fusdafiles%252FLaws-Regs%252Fimprovementact2018_march_2024.pdf%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FyKjPfYXA0gO_5fgi2H_Q8IEujww%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768939293%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ayXj24cni%2FfYGGJ1C5nZ3f8jNL0IY%2F0v2mC8zUgv6EE%3D&reserved=0) to provide information that Congress, stakeholders, and the general public need to hold USDA accountable on the progress that has been made in improving services to underserved producers. This year’s report shows FSA direct and guaranteed loans were made to a greater percentage of young and beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as improvements in the participation rates of minority borrowers. The report also highlights FSA’s microloan program’s new focus on urban agriculture operations and niche market lending, as well as increased support for producers seeking direct loans for farm ownership in the face of increasing land values across the country.  FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made several impactful improvements including:   * The Loan Assistance Tool that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process. * The Online Loan Application, an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan. * An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local USDA Service Center to pay a loan installment. * A simplified direct loan paper application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.   USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local FSA farm loan staff to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available to assist with starting, expanding, or maintaining their agricultural operation. To conduct business with FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center  FSA helps America’s farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county off ices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit, [www.fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FUTNib5bgWmPFpCAriFO0FVbUcqQ%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768945020%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=tx1K5IMUb7lQ9ulOJgf4bt4knu6uIhNrBS0S0zIiiM0%3D&reserved=0)  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://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fwww.usda.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Fy4LXJl4WSM7bGkq2AsoqDgV2BW4%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768950613%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=X%2BRSNGx1nJoCmP1vXumqvMBYPhQmuSr9HMqoREqKqP8%3D&reserved=0).   |  | | --- | |  |  FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy  |  | | --- | | Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide you with interim financing after harvest to help you meet cash flow needs without having to sell your commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.  FSA is now accepting requests for 202X MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.  Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, upland cotton, rice, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), peanuts, wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be purchased at the posted county price (or adjusted world price or national posted price) for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to Adjusted Gross Income provisions.  To be considered eligible for an LDP, you must have form [CCC-633EZ](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fforms.sc.egov.usda.gov%252Fefcommon%252FeFileServices%252FeFormsAdmin%252FCCC0633EZ_140328V03.pdf%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FsYtoGe3A_02ZJfkHTh1d5CjsfFk%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768956191%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=embNNsV87jHbLFFMEfWQ8gWdDH2P7zV8LbqMqgwe1D0%3D&reserved=0), Page 1 on file at your local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.  Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.  Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that if your total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds $900,000, then you’re not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. You must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.  For more information and additional eligibility requirements, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Fj0Nl-RyHerjmQKjM4QQ4Irey1VA%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768961964%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2wM%2FXd2a1v0cmQK%2Bf4qgUAv%2FV8bteVDAeYizz0E9Q4k%3D&reserved=0). |  |  | | --- | |  |  FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fprograms-and-services%252Ffarm-loan-programs%252Ffarm-ownership-loans%252Findex%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FsawYBH9StZHS79UB1OZ6ms4_-Uw%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768967509%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=pYftDKoixUlH3k6P6ojz%2BigF5Y1XQS%2FBzgYiI6%2BeFtM%3D&reserved=0) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.  There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fprograms-and-services%252Ffarm-loan-programs%252Fmicroloans%252Findex%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Fvt_T-X31kVy9hmE64UHPRUQDVy8%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768973076%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=7BmuSGWl3tc%2F3DO08mWywNNvBYEG6Oo0sqc7AmPvNk8%3D&reserved=0) option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.  Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is $600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.  The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.  For more information about farm loans, contact your local County USDA Service Center  or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FaGZoaeV-wfIJ9MryI8xCK4OPiLM%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768978545%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QadslbyrQpfs7hIuO6GYdHowdiD8Wp%2FPbIXGpIdY4DY%3D&reserved=0).   |  | | --- | |  |  USDA Accepts Nearly 2.2 Million Acres through this year’s Grassland, General, and Continuous CRP signups 2024 CRP signups successfully bring CRP nearer to acreage cap  The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting offers for more than 2.2 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year’s Grassland, General, and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signups administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). With these accepted acres, enrollment is very near the 27 million CRP acreage cap.  **Grassland CRP**  Including the nearly 1.44 million acres recently accepted in Grassland CRP for offers received in 2024, producers will have enrolled more than 10 million acres in this popular working-lands program.  Grassland CRP allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and further CRP’s impacts. Grassland CRP leverages working lands practices to improve biodiversity and conserve environmentally sensitive land.  Enrolled acres help sequester carbon in vegetation and soil, while enhancing resilience to drought and wildfire. Meanwhile, producers can still conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land, which supports agricultural production.  Top states for this year’s Grassland CRP signup include:   * **Nebraska** with 237,853 acres accepted * **Colorado** with 218,145 acres accepted * **New Mexico** with 185,619 acres accepted   Additionally, to target conservation in key geographies, USDA prioritizes land within two National Priority Zones: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Dust Bowl area. The 2024 Grassland CRP enrollment has added more than 560,000 acres in the Priority Zones, bringing the total acres to 3.8 million. By conserving working grasslands and other lands that underpin iconic big game migrations, land enrolled in these zones contributes to broader USDA conservation efforts through [Working Lands for Wildlife](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.nrcs.usda.gov%252Fprograms-initiatives%252Fworking-lands-for-wildlife%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F8m1y6_4DEjhuy9NkIc2uIt5pBao%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768983989%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QBSyE12gxTAC5Zs9mNjoAYqF4Xy%2Bbhb5LdnoJyQjcC8%3D&reserved=0).  **General and Continuous CRP**  FSA also has accepted nearly 200,000 acres through the General signup, bringing total acres enrolled in General CRP to 7.9 million acres. As one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the United States, CRP offers a range of conservation options to farmers, ranchers and landowners. It has been an especially strong opportunity for farmers with less productive or marginal cropland, helping them re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and support wildlife habitat.  In January 2024, FSA opened enrollment for Continuous CRP. Under this enrollment, 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. To date, in 2024, more than 565,000 acres have been offered through Continuous CRP bringing the total acres enrolled to 8.5 million.  Producers can still make an offer to participate in CRP through the Continuous CRP signup, which is ongoing, by contacting FSA at their local USDA Service Center.   |  | | --- | |  |  Ask The Expert: A Q&A with Dr. Julie Gauthier about Avian Influenza, Dairy Cows, and the Importance of Testing The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, subtype H5N1, in dairy cattle in 12 states. To protect our livestock industry from the threat posed by H5N1, USDA is taking a number of actions with our federal partners—one of them being a significant update to the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fprograms-and-services%252Fdisaster-assistance-program%252Femergency-assist-for-livestock-honey-bees-fish%252Findex%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F-Qez8-CdaR3_TZzUuJGx__tvL7o%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768989471%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=p7VxFhtDlANnyOAr3CEZMUh%2F5X4AbNZzkTn5ISCATlM%3D&reserved=0).  Those of you who incur milk losses in their dairy herds due to H5N1 can now apply for financial assistance through ELAP. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded ELAP policy through the rule-making process; this expansion assists with financial losses resulting from reduced milk production when cows are removed from commercial milking in dairy herds with a confirmed positive H5N1 test. Positive tests must be confirmed through APHIS’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).  So, in this Ask the Expert, Dr. Julie Gauthier – Executive Director of Veterinary Services’ Field Operations and Policy Liaison for the dairy cattle HPAI response, answers questions about H5N1 in the United States, its current effects in our dairy industry, and the process and importance of testing your cows to help protect them, your operation, and the dairy industry as a whole. [Read full interview here.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fblog%252Fask-expert-qa-with-dr-julie-gauthier-about-avian-influenza-dairy-cows-and-importance-testing%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F_sVD2bxrcZNMspLE_I0_-rMjsOA%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549768995021%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LCQEtsc1vgqtRJDmXH2rtHLWHUx5TLuDlVmFQxX%2B5sk%3D&reserved=0)   |  | | --- | |  |  FSA Offers Safety Net Programs for Honeybee Producers he Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers two programs that have specific safety net benefits for producers of honeybees and honey. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) assist producers when disasters impact honey production or damage or destroy colonies, hives or honeybee feed.  NAP is designed to reduce financial losses when natural disasters result in lower yields or crop losses, including honey. NAP coverage is equivalent to catastrophic insurance, meaning it covers up to 50 percent of a producer’s normal yield (must have at least a 50 percent loss) at 55 percent of the average market price. The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates 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.  The NAP service fee is the lesser of $325 per crop or $825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of $1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.  You must apply for NAP coverage by December 31 prior to the year for which you’re seeking coverage.  ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.  Both the NAP and ELAP programs require you to report the number of colonies you have in production to FSA by Jan. 2, 2025. You must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of changes in the total number of colonies or when honeybees are moved to another county.  For both programs, you must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent.  To learn more about programs for honey and honeybee producers, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F2%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FeHEKCHXxS1pMFaY2y3ydSUHrQv0%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769001855%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ss%2FV8cFb9Y2qirBuWbV0OlspSPTw1gxSPPWZisOTSuI%3D&reserved=0).   |  | | --- | |  |  FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options There are options for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about your options.   |  | | --- | |  |  USDA Now Accepting Applications for Available Funds to Help Cover Organic Certification Costs Through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fprograms-and-services%252Foccsp%252Findex%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FYTJi9yIBKcssKi4-ITQRa2n4AWQ%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769007506%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=7X5TUb6xXu7M7NOixGoqsqHas4U3ffun7Bazp3HcxH4%3D&reserved=0) (OCCSP), USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will cover up to 75% of organic certification costs at a maximum of $750 per certification category. FSA is now accepting applications, and organic producers and handlers should apply for OCCSP by the Oct. 31, 2024, deadline for eligible expenses incurred from Oct. 1, 2023, to Sept. 30, 2024. FSA will issue payments as applications are received and approved.  OCCSP was part of a [broader organic announcement](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fnews-room%252Fnews-releases%252F2024%252Fusda-easing-producers-transition-to-organic-production-with-new-programs-and-partnerships-announces-investments-to-create-and-expand-organic-markets%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F-n-necmvaHaW9c6bPfeDirGXn10%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769013017%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Dg1CCbISrAQGOTk07ClSPv1uTbUrcOmNnRx2ewt3i1U%3D&reserved=0) made by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on May 15, 2024, which also included the Organic Market Development Grant program and Organic Transition Initiative.  **Eligible Applicants, Expenses and Categories**  OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of organic agricultural commodities for expenses incurred obtaining or maintaining organic certification under USDA’s [National Organic Program](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.ams.usda.gov%252Fabout-ams%252Fprograms-offices%252Fnational-organic-program%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F1IvNigM9ZcrJ8mJg73F58csnvas%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769018656%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=S%2BnS2invKrTg%2FzW%2BzVEdb35EjJ9mILXomc%2BssiexLqU%3D&reserved=0). Eligible OCCSP applicants include any certified organic producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent.  Cost share assistance covers expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, inspector travel expenses, user fees, sales assessments and postage. OCCSP pays a maximum of $750 per certification category for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling, and state organic program fees (California only).  **How to Apply**  To apply, producers and handlers should contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fworking-with-us%252Fservice-center-locator%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FkgAS5lTwBYXTwcG8a7FPZiGeOSA%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769024104%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=ExTeCA%2BhIHgQ%2FZNtjDONXZD8ySAwhSWP3eHR8ukPLZA%3D&reserved=0) and be prepared to provide documentation of organic certification and eligible expenses. OCCSP applications can also be submitted through participating state departments of agriculture.  For more information, visit the [OCCSP](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fprograms-and-services%252Foccsp%252Findex%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F2%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FZ6_ZeO_ea8WLnC-g5EbdF0tqVlU%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769029583%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=73tsbmF5gL1AJrEDr2aYGW5MhSEYj9cADz2OHfXVOs8%3D&reserved=0) webpage.  **Opportunity for State Departments of Agriculture**  FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA posted a [funding opportunity summary on grants.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fgrants.gov%252Fsearch-results-detail%252F354179%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FQVQ9XV3hKR-2PfCI9tjhARsewdI%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769035235%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=MXceSmKxPYgUr5Kqw%2FEbbbPcjP%2Bcs62IWPE4tF3ZeUY%3D&reserved=0) and will electronically mail the Notice of Funding Opportunity to all eligible state departments of agriculture. Applications are due July 12, 2024.  If a state department of agriculture chooses to participate in OCCSP, both the state department of agriculture and FSA county offices in that state will accept OCCSP applications and make payments to eligible certified operations. Producers or handlers can receive OCCSP assistance from either FSA or the participating state department of agriculture but not both.  **More Information**  USDA offers other assistance for organic producers, including the [Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fyour-business%252Forganic%252Forganic-transition-initiative%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FtyfjwFsBxHOfCFE7a0g4jJt9YbM%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769041021%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=A%2B77MN7e175D24Mc4PKN29%2B%2F%2FbYRvBHFyApePKFO%2Ba8%3D&reserved=0), which includes direct farmer assistance for organic production and processing and conservation. For more information on organic agriculture, visit [farmers.gov/organic.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fyour-business%252Forganic%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Fv897irxJ4f5WKmmzK6yAqULSM7k%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769046613%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=bRNlOxi%2BOdsObkLWx68Zf0mPztNov2Bm5wXyRQRfw4Y%3D&reserved=0)  To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Fworking-with-us%252Fservice-center-locator%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F2%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FYT5L2mbTmfJn65mSBwe38ZNNS7g%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769052101%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sRU8qY2wBd53J3Ix7Q6eUcmhTvcVeoifSDls%2B2SugK4%3D&reserved=0). 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](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Faccount%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2F8KGFNPQH9tFmO9fdt8wncdqVd10%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769057688%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VHD2RqkNZMiB%2FXJTxQeacLF7jLnkk0jtcMlojuX%2FDXg%3D&reserved=0). If you don’t have an account, sign up today.   |  | | --- | |  |  USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that most farm loan borrowers will soon be able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttp%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252F%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FN2ikkVs5Wzuwpo2rUKzsrZOxkcM%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769063223%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4irDLNAbxskNHzE%2BmqGcIsA7sOYucxkJ%2BOtavCUhtWc%3D&reserved=0) in early February. Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, especially for producers who may have limited time during the planting or harvest seasons to visit a local FSA office; modernize and improve customer service; provide additional customer self-service tools; and expand credit access to assist more producers.  On average, local USDA Service Centers process more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year. Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay their loan installment. Farm loan payments can now be made at the borrower’s convenience, on their schedule and outside of FSA office hours.  Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA’s farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities. This new service for producers means that farm loan employees will have more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.  The Pay My Loan feature can be accessed at farmers.gov/loans. To use the payment feature, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication (“eAuth”) account or a Login.gov account](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.farmers.gov%252Faccount%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F2%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2Fth-bEBJvibYBts2yMXlTJ0pRg8g%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769068819%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vsnuNAPos%2BFsUlOhi%2F8m%2Br3M3IN%2BcrTlVBQabzd1NV4%3D&reserved=0). This initial release only allows individuals with loans to make online payments. For now, borrowers with jointly payable checks will need to continue to make loan payments through their local office.  FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made various improvements including:   * The [Online Loan Application](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fnews-room%252Fnews-releases%252F2023%252Fusda-now-accepting-applications-for-farm-loans-online%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FffoYs4eG8ldVZBbNwe6dzODZ3VI%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769074452%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=kNcT2u2QeWeBQd84zTSsS6ZYk6u8HtrxZZ7hc%2Fw5HnQ%3D&reserved=0), an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan. * The [Loan Assistance Tool](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fnews-room%252Fnews-releases%252F2022%252Fusda-launches-loan-assistance-tool-to-enhance-equity-and-customer-service%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FZ_4VlRtonxj1vMR3j0sHxmcy0pw%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769080234%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=PqUjeXFdWqeVL9tJRGOhWCfnbAqNFuM19NRwvXca%2BEY%3D&reserved=0) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process. * A [simplified direct loan paper application](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fwww.fsa.usda.gov%252Fnews-room%252Fnews-releases%252F2023%252Fusda-develops-simplified-direct-loan-application-to-improve-customer-service%253Futm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FllQ519aeyGnYOsxp96_m2mDtv3M%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769085937%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=cf5tR0hwpUpAfGfeOnmmQjCnTPFI98MB44xyKDO95LE%3D&reserved=0), which reduced loan applications by more than half, from 29 pages to 13 pages.  |  | | --- | |  |   Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting/event/function should contact Mary Anne Coffin at 207-990-9140 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. |
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| |  | | --- | | Icon  Description automatically generated |   Maine /USDA Service Center 967 Illinois Avenue Bangor, ME  04401     |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Farm Service Agency**  Sherry Hamel, 207-990-9140  State Executive Director  sherry.hamel@usda.gov  Website:  www.fsa.usda.gov/me | **Natural Resources Conservation Service**  Matt Walker, 207- 990-9585  State Conservationist [matt.walker@usda.gov](mailto:matt.walker@usda.gov)  Website:  [www.me.nrcs.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me%2FL0%2Fhttps%3A%252F%252Fgcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com%252F%253Fdata%3D04%25257C01%25257C%25257Cecf13b99f97a4d0461ef08d95e52a382%25257Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%25257C0%25257C0%25257C637644531287399906%25257CUnknown%25257CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%25253D%25257C1000%2526reserved%3D0%2526sdata%3Dk%25252FGUSE%25252BxyQzc6mcY5FvrM%25252FFlsnwWF9VVXRug3AOENBE%25253D%2526url%3Dhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fwww.me.nrcs.usda.gov%25252F%25253Futm_medium%25253Demail%252526utm_source%25253Dgovdelivery%2526utm_medium%3Demail%2526utm_source%3Dgovdelivery%2F1%2F010001917bbcb0c3-488cb545-08db-41de-8ca0-6d9a61a40b19-000000%2FUnRdWKsn-Xri_UUUWnDx3Gjwhj8%3D388&data=05%7C02%7Cmaryanne.coffin%40usda.gov%7Cda8f5b7b44a342b62e8b08dcc2e77305%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638599549769091646%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YhDkyUe9MMgd%2FnoW3%2BLoFVZvZDoM%2BbzDjH96VhXt3io%3D&reserved=0) | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |