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USDA Provides Additional Pandemic Assistance to Hog Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new program to assist hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale during the period in which these producers faced the greatest reduction in market prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP) is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative and addresses gaps in previous assistance for hog producers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications Dec. 15, 2021 through Feb. 25, 2022.

SMHPP provides assistance to hog producers who sold hogs through a negotiated sale from April 16, 2020 through Sept. 1, 2020. Negotiated sale, or negotiated formula sale, means a sale of hogs by a producer to a packer under which the base price for the hogs is determined by seller-buyer interaction and agreement on a delivery day. USDA is offering SMHPP as packer production was reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic due to employee illness and supply chain issues, resulting in fewer negotiated hogs being procured and subsequent lower market prices.

The Department has set aside up to \$50 million in pandemic assistance funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for SMHPP.

SMHPP Program Details

Eligible hogs include hogs sold through a negotiated sale by producers between April 16, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020. To be eligible, the producer must be a person or legal entity who has ownership in the hogs and whose production facilities are located in the United States, including U.S. territories. Contract producers, federal, state and local governments, including public schools and packers are not eligible for SMHPP.

SMHPP payments will be calculated by multiplying the number of head of eligible hogs, not to exceed 10,000 head, by the payment rate of \$54 per head. FSA will issue payments to eligible hog producers as applications are received and approved.

Applying for Assistance

Eligible hog producers can apply for SMHPP starting Dec. 15, 2021, by completing the FSA-940, Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/smhpp for a copy of the Notice of Funds Availability, information on applicant eligibility and more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. Hog producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

USDA Adds Mycoplasma Bovis As Eligible Bison Disease for LIP

Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) provides benefits to eligible livestock owners or contract growers for livestock deaths exceeding normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions, including eligible adverse weather, eligible disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. In addition, LIP assists eligible livestock owners that must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from an eligible loss condition.

Regarding losses due to eligible disease, research indicates that the bacteria *M. bovis* is transmitted from bison to bison through instances of adverse weather conditions that cause stressors for bison and enhance transmission and symptoms. Once symptomatic, it is nearly impossible to treat *M. bovis* in bison.

There is no vaccine currently labeled to mitigate the effects of the bacteria in bison which often results in the death of eligible livestock. No acceptable management practices to treat the disease exist for bison that are stricken with *M. bovis*.

LIP eligibility for M. bovis bison deaths due to eligible adverse weather events are established by FSA State Offices.

The deadline to file a notice of loss and submit a LIP application for payment specifically for M. bovis bison deaths that occurred in 2021 is Feb. 28, 2022. At the time of application, producers should be prepared to provide proof of bison death losses due to M. bovis.

For bison deaths resulting from M. bovis in 2022 and future years, producers are required to file a notice of loss for livestock that died as a direct result of an eligible loss condition within 30 calendar days from the ending date of the eligible loss condition.

For more information or to report losses and file a LIP application for payment, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Deadline Extended to Enroll in 2022 Dairy Margin Coverage and Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage

USDA has extended the deadline to enroll in Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage (SDMC) for program year 2022. **The deadline to apply for 2022 coverage is now March 25, 2022.** As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing efforts to support dairy farmers and rural communities, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) opened DMC and SDMC signup in December 2021 to help producers manage economic risk brought on by milk price and feed cost disparities.

Enrollment for 2022 DMC is currently at 55% of the 2021 program year enrollment. Producers who enrolled in DMC for 2021 received margin payments each month, January through November for a total of \$1.2 billion, with an average payment of \$60,275 per operation.

The DMC program, created by the 2018 Farm Bill, offers reasonably priced protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

Supplemental DMC will provide \$580 million to better help small- and mid-sized dairy operations that have increased production over the years but were not able to enroll the additional production. Now, they will be able to retroactively receive payments for that supplemental production.

After making any revisions to 2021 DMC contracts for Supplemental DMC, producers can sign up for 2022 coverage. DMC provides eligible dairy producers with risk management coverage that pays producers when the difference between the price of milk and the cost of feed falls below a certain level. So far in 2021, DMC payments have triggered for January through November for more than \$1 billion.

For DMC enrollment, producers must certify with FSA that the operation is commercially marketing milk, sign all required forms and pay the \$100 administrative fee. The fee is waived for farmers who are considered limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged, or a military veteran. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

USDA has also changed the DMC feed cost formula to better reflect the actual cost dairy farmers pay for high-quality alfalfa hay. FSA now calculates payments using 100% premium alfalfa hay rather than 50%. In December 2021, following publication of the new feed cost policy, \$102 million was paid to producers as a result of the revised high quality alfalfa feed cost formula.

The amended feed cost formula will make DMC payments more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses and DMC payments. Higher DMC feed cost calculations due to the premium alfalfa adjustment could more frequently trigger DMC indemnity payments for dairy operations having DMC coverage in 2022.

Producers with Crop Insurance to Receive Premium Benefit for Cover Crops

Agricultural producers who have coverage under most crop insurance policies are eligible for a premium benefit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) if they planted cover crops during the 2022 crop year. To receive the benefit from this year's Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), producers must report cover crop acreage by **March 15, 2022**.

PCCP, offered by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), helps farmers maintain their cover crop systems, despite the financial challenges posed by the pandemic and is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for Producers](#) initiative, a bundle of programs to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions.

PCCP provides premium support to producers who insured their crop with most insurance policies and planted a qualifying cover crop during the 2022 crop year. The premium support is \$5 per acre, but no more than the full premium amount owed.

< [Pandemic Cover Crop Program](#) >

USDA Invests \$2 Million in Risk Management Education for Historically Underserved and Small-Scale Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$2 million in cooperative agreements this year for risk management education and training programs that support historically underserved producers, small-scale farmers, and conservation practices. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is investing in organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, universities, and county cooperative extension offices, to develop training and education tools to help producers learn how to effectively manage long-term risks and challenges.

RMA works with partners to assist producers, especially historically underserved, farmers and ranchers, in effectively managing long-term risks and challenges. RMA re-established its support of risk management education in 2021, investing nearly \$1 million in nine risk management education projects. From 2002 to 2018, RMA provided annual funding for risk management education projects, supporting more than \$126 million worth of projects in historically underserved communities.

How Organizations Can Apply

A broad range of risk management training activities are eligible for funding consideration, including training on Federal crop insurance options, record keeping, financial management, non-insurance-based risk management tools, and natural disaster preparedness among others. Partners can also train farmers at all levels on risk management options that help secure local food systems.

This selection process is competitive, and RMA will prioritize projects focused on underserved, organic, and specialty crop producers. Additionally, organizations providing training related to climate change, wildfire

response, local foods, and urban ag will also be given stronger consideration.

Interested organizations must apply by 5:59 pm Eastern Time on March 11 through the Results Verification System at rvs.umn.edu.

[Learn more.](#)

USDA Announces Conservation Reserve Program Signups for 2022

Agricultural producers and landowners can sign up soon for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a cornerstone conservation program offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a key tool in the Biden-Harris Administration effort to address climate change and achieve other natural resource benefits. The General CRP signup will run from **Jan. 31 to March 11**, and the Grassland CRP signup will run from **April 4 to May 13**.

Producers and landowners enrolled 4.6 million acres into CRP signups in 2021, including 2.5 million acres in the largest Grassland CRP signup in history. There are currently 22.1 million acres enrolled, and FSA is aiming to reach the 25.5-million-acre cap statutorily set for fiscal year 2022.

CRP Signups

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.

Meanwhile, 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.

Alongside these programs, producers and landowners can enroll acres in Continuous CRP under the ongoing sign up, which includes projects available through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).

Climate Benefits

Last year, FSA enacted a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP General and Continuous signups, to better target CRP on addressing climate change. This incentive aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CRP's climate-smart practices include establishment of trees and permanent grasses, development of wildlife habitat and wetland restoration. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive is annual, and the amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.

Additionally, in order to better target the program toward climate outcomes, USDA invested \$10 million last year in the CRP Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation (MAE) program to measure and monitor the soil carbon and climate resilience impacts of conservation practices over the life of new CRP contracts. This will enable the agency to further refine the program and practices to provide producers tools for increased climate resilience.

More Information on CRP

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program -- for General CRP before the **March 11 deadline**, and for Grassland CRP before the **May 13 deadline**. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Due to the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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.

USDA to Invest \$1 Billion in Climate Smart Commodities, Expanding Markets, Strengthening Rural America

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on February 7 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is delivering on its promise to expand markets by investing \$1 billion in partnerships to support America's climate-smart farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. The new [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#) opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits. USDA is now accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a climate-smart commodity is defined as an agricultural commodity that is produced using agricultural (farming, ranching or forestry) practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon.

Funding will be provided to partners through the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation for pilot projects to provide incentives to producers and landowners to:

- implement climate-smart production practices, activities, and systems on working lands,
- measure/quantify, monitor and verify the carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits associated with those practices, and
- develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

Funding will be provided in two funding pools, and applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on:

- April 8, 2022, for the first funding pool (proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million), and
- May 27, 2022, for the second funding pool (proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999).

A wide range of organizations may apply, but the primary applicant must be an entity, not an individual.

USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and is specifically seeking proposals from entities serving all types of producers, including small or historically underserved producers.

Visit usda.gov for additional information including Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

New Online Tool Allows Farmers, Ranchers to Easily Report Anticompetitive Practices

Farmers, ranchers, and other producers and growers now have a one-stop shop to help ensure they are treated fairly. The new farmerfairness.gov portal developed jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Justice (DOJ) allows you to report potential violations of livestock and poultry antitrust laws, including the Packers and Stockyards Act. [Read More](#)

USDA Announces Inaugural Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack selected 12 members to serve on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) inaugural Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture to provide input on policy development and to help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

The new Secretary's Advisory Committee is part of USDA's efforts to support urban agriculture, creating a network for feedback. Urban agriculture plays an important role in producing fresh, healthy food in areas where grocery stores are scarce, and also provides jobs and beautifies neighborhoods.

Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture

The Committee is made up of agricultural producers, and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing. Members include:

- **Jerry Ann Hebron**, Mich., Urban Producer
- **Bobby Wilson**, Ga., Urban Producer
- **Viraj Puri**, N.Y., Innovative Producer
- **Kaben Smallwood**, Okla., Innovative Producer
- **Sally Brown**, Wash., Higher Education
- **John Erwin**, Md., Higher Education
- **Carl Wallace**, Ohio, Non-Profit Representative
- **John Lebeaux**, Mass., Business and Economic Development Representative
- **Zachari Curtis**, D.C., Supply Chain Experience
- **Allison Paap**, Calif., Financing Entity Representative
- **Tara Chadwick**, Fla., Related Experience
- **Angela Mason, III.**, Related Experience

USDA and the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production peer reviewed more than 300 nominees, and Vilsack made the final selections. Selections ensured geographic, racial and gender diversity and a broad range of agricultural experience. The new members will serve terms of one to three years.

The first meeting of this inaugural committee, which will be open to the public, will take place in late February. More details will be available in the *Federal Register* and at farmers.gov/urban and the new [Federal Advisory](#)

[Committee for Urban Agriculture website.](#)

USDA and Urban Agriculture

The advisory committee and county committees are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Grants that target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.
- Cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing \$260,000 for risk management training and crop insurance education for historically underserved and urban producers through partnerships between USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#)(RMA) and the University of Maryland, University of Connecticut, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems.
- Providing technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)(NRCS).
- Organizing 11 [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) urban and suburban county committees. FSA will organize additional committees.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction. More information is available at [farmers.gov/urban](#) and the new [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture website.](#)

Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include grants from USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) and [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) as well as [FSA loans](#).

New River Forecast Model Integrates Artificial Intelligence for Better Water Management in the West

Water supply forecasts are important for any crop year. But for farmers, ranchers, foresters, and water managers in the West facing extreme and debilitating drought conditions, those forecasts have never been more critical to their operations and livelihoods.

Since the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, NRCS has helped America's producers plan for their operations through the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecast program. The program runs a massive network of mountain climate and snow monitoring sites across the western U.S. called SNOTEL. This is coupled with other data and computer models to predict the amount of river runoff in the upcoming spring and summer. These water supply forecasts are used by America's producers to plan their operations for the year, by helping guide choices like crop selection, water rights rentals, and whether to leave land fallow.

Over the decades, that information has grown to be used by many other groups for many purposes – from optimizing hydroelectric power generation, to assessing seasonal flood risk, to complying with legal decisions around endangered species and international treaties governing transboundary rivers. The value of water managed using these forecasts is easily in the billions of dollars, and even modest increases in accuracy can create over \$100 million a year in public benefit for just one river basin.

However, major forecasting improvements are needed because of narrowing margins between water supply and water demand in the ever-more-thirsty American West. Those tighter margins reflect a combination of climate change and population growth, and they mean there's less room for error than ever before in water management, requiring improved efficiency and accuracy in everything we do.

NRCS has unveiled a new computer application to address this pressing need: the multi-model machine learning metasystem, or M⁴. This first-of-its-kind model will be the largest migration of artificial intelligence, also known as AI, into real-world river prediction programs.

Researchers first experimented with machine learning, a branch of AI, for hydrologic forecasting a quarter-century ago. But they couldn't jump the research-to-applications gap – the needed step of getting from what works in the lab to what works in the field. Ironically, scientists and engineers working outside the tech sector have often been the last to adopt AI into their everyday practices. Unlike some other areas, STEM fields have long used sophisticated math and computer models. AI had to successfully compete with those existing methods to gain widespread acceptance, which in many fields, including earth and environmental science, is only starting to happen now. The average hydrologist is still more likely to use AI – in a smartphone app, for example – to find the quickest route to the office in the morning, than to apply it in their work when they get there!

We aimed to change that. Applied scientists at NRCS took a pragmatic approach: they looked in detail at what they needed in the next generation of their operational river forecast system, and then created a new tailor-made solution from existing building blocks. That included adopting automated machine learning, which makes it easier and faster to use, and radically improving the explainability of the results, putting to bed a long-standing worry about so-called 'black box' AI technologies. Testing proves the system is more accurate, robust, and simple-to-use than ever before, while keeping features that worked in the older models.

Our hope is that M⁴ will help farmers, ranchers, and foresters – our customers – better plan for their operations and continue to have the means to provide for people in the U.S. and around the world who depend on American agriculture. And given how many other water users and government agencies also rely on NRCS forecasts, we're also looking forward to seeing how the migration of AI into real-world, high-stakes environmental information systems like M⁴ will help everyone in the American West use increasingly pressured water resources more effectively while protecting our shared natural environment.

To read more about this new system, see the [recent paper published in the Journal of Hydrology](#), the top-ranked, peer-reviewed scientific journal in water resources. For more information about the Snow Survey and Water Supply program, [visit our website](#).

NRCS Announces Conservation Funding Opportunities for 2022

USDA has several fiscal year 2022 assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and private landowners for key programs, such as the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP), [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) and [Agricultural Management Assistance](#) (AMA) program.

Through conservation programs, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

Applying for Assistance

NRCS accepts applications for its conservation programs year-round. State Technical Committees, composed of representatives from conservation and agricultural-related organizations, work with NRCS to set state-specific, ranking dates to evaluate applications for funding. These dates account for producer needs, staff workload and ensure potential participants have ample opportunity to apply. Producers should apply by their state's ranking dates to be considered for funding in the current cycle.

Funding is provided through a competitive process. [State-specific, ranking dates](#) for all programs are available. Applications received after ranking dates will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

Program Options

EQIP provides cost share assistance for producers to use 170-plus conservation practices to address a wide variety of resource concerns. Within EQIP, Conservation Incentive Contracts allow producers to further target priority resource concerns. CSP helps producers take their conservation activities to the next level through comprehensive conservation and advanced conservation activities. ACEP helps producers enroll wetlands, grasslands and farmlands into easements for long-term protection. Additionally, through RCPP, producers and landowners can work with partners who are co-investing with NRCS on targeted projects.

Historically Underserved Producer Benefits

Special provisions are also available for [historically underserved producers](#). For EQIP, historically underserved producers are eligible for advance payments to help offset costs related to purchasing materials or contracting services up front. In addition, historically underserved producers can receive higher EQIP payment rates (up to 90% of average cost). NRCS sets aside EQIP, CSP and ACEP funds for historically underserved producers.

Conservation Practices and Climate

NRCS conservation programs play a critical role in USDA's commitment to partnering with farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and local communities to deliver climate solutions that strengthen agricultural operations and rural America. States may prioritize a variety of voluntary conservation practices through these NRCS programs, including those that support climate-smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF).

In fiscal year 2022, EQIP and CSP will provide targeted funding for CSAF practices, and Conservation Incentive Contracts – a new EQIP program – will be available nationwide with an emphasis on CSAF practices. Building on these efforts, NRCS will also prioritize climate investments through ACEP, RCPP and Conservation Innovation Grants.

Producers, landowners and forest managers interested in applying for assistance should contact the NRCS at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, contact your local county USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Is the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program Right for You?

Farmers and ranchers rely on crop insurance to protect themselves from disasters and unforeseen events, but not all crops are insurable through the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides producers another option to obtain coverage against disaster for these crops. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insured crops impacted by natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevents crop planting.

Commercially produced crops and agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available are generally eligible for NAP. Eligible crops include those grown specifically for food, fiber, livestock consumption, biofuel or biobased products, or be commodities such as value loss crops like Christmas trees and ornamental nursery, honey, maple sap, and many others. Contact your FSA office to see which crops are eligible in your state and county.

Eligible causes of loss include drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, earthquake, flood. These events must occur during the NAP policy coverage period, before or during harvest, and the disaster must directly affect the eligible crop. For guidance on causes of loss not listed, contact your local FSA county office.

Interested producers must apply for coverage using FSA form [CCC-471](#), "Application for Coverage," and pay the applicable service fee at the FSA office where their farm records are maintained. These must be filed by the application closing date. Closing dates vary by crop, so it is important to contact your local FSA office as soon as possible to ensure you don't miss an application closing date.

At the time of application, each producer will be provided a copy of the [NAP Basic Provisions](#), which describes how NAP works and all the requirements you must follow to maintain NAP coverage. NAP participants must provide accurate annual reports of their production in non-loss years to ensure their NAP coverage is beneficial to their individual operation.

Producers are required to pay service fees which vary depending on the number of crops and number of counties your operation is located in. 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. Premiums also apply when producers elect higher levels of coverage with a maximum premium of \$15,750 per person or legal entity depending on the maximum payment limitation that may apply to the NAP covered producer. The service fee can be waived for beginning, qualifying veteran, and limited resource farmers and rancher., These farmers and ranchers can also receive a 50 percent reduction in the premium.

For more detailed information on NAP, download the [NAP Fact Sheet](#). To get started with NAP, we recommend you contact your [local USDA service center](#).

Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- A married woman must sign her given name: Mrs. Mary Doe, not Mrs. John Doe
- For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent

Note, by signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Streamlining How You Find Information on Farmers.gov

If you've been to farmers.gov before, things may look a little different from the last time you were here. We've made some changes, to improve how you find information so that you can find what you need even more easily and efficiently.

The big, green navigation bar near the top of every page – it's different now. It opens up, to show descriptions and subtopics, making it quicker and easier to figure out what's where and reduce guessing. Why? Two

reasons: First, farmers.gov has grown a lot over the years and the old navigation wasn't designed for the load. Second, because you asked for it. We analyzed your comments through the "Feedback" button on the site and tested our new designs and information organization with real farmers and ranchers through surveys and live testing sessions.

Along with the new website navigation, we restructured how our pages and topics are grouped and organized to help you easily access the information you need. We also relabeled some of our existing pages using more direct language. This means that pages or information you've used before may have different labels or be in new places.

Important changes:

- The old Fund page is now called Loans. The Loans page has information and resources about USDA loans, including the Farm Loan Programs.
- The Recover page is now Protection and Recovery. This page has information to help you prepare and recover from natural disasters, and to mitigate risk for your operation.
- The Conserve page is now Conservation. This page hasn't changed much and still has information on how to implement conservation practices, improve and preserve natural resources, and address conservation concerns.
- The Manage page is now Working With Us. This page connects you with resources that tell you how USDA can help you start, expand, enhance, or improve your agricultural operation.
- The Connect page has been replaced with Your Business, a guide to USDA resources that cater to your specific operation. Information that was on the Connect page has been moved to the Contact Us page and the Get Involved page.

We are always updating farmers.gov based on your feedback and to stay up-to-date with important USDA announcements. We've recently created some new webpages, and updated some existing ones, to better equip you with the vital information you need. There are even more new pages coming soon, so stay tuned!

For farmers.gov, we don't guess what farmers and ranchers want from a website. We start by asking, then test our designs with volunteers who are also farmers and ranchers.

There's a feedback button on every page of farmers.gov. Based on your feedback, we looked for ways to make our site easier to use and to build the information that you're looking for. Live user testing sessions provide data, such as this heatmap, showing where testers tended to click during an exercise.

You helped us create the new navigation design, the new information organization, and told us how to speak using your words, and not legalese.

Check out farmers.gov today!

FSA Outlines MAL and LDP Policy

The 2018 Farm Bill extends loan authority through 2023 for Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

MALs and 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. The loan term is 9 months. The grain can be stored on farm the farm or an approved warehouse. 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 2021 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, 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.

Applying for Farm Storage Facility Loans

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks. A variety of structures and equipment are eligible for the FSFL including augers, grain trailers, and, hay trailers.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$100,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, contact your Local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

USDA- MISSOURI

FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

601 Business Loop 70 West, Suite 225
Columbia, MO 65203
Phone: 573-876-0925
Fax: 855-830-0680

fsa.usda.gov

State Executive Director
Joe Aull

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

601 Business Loop 70 West, Suite 250
Columbia, MO 65203
Phone: 573-876-0901
Fax: 855-865-2188

nrcs.usda.gov

State Conservationist
Scott Edwards