

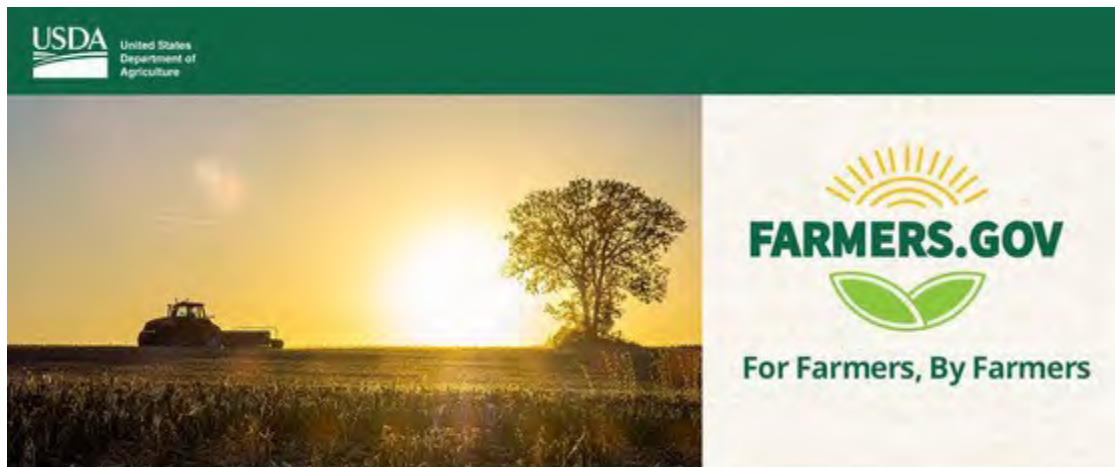


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Some USDA Service Centers in Montana are open to limited visitors by appointment only. Contact your Service Center to schedule an appointment. You can find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator. Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff also continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Producers can learn more about how to leverage these digital offerings by visiting <https://www.farmers.gov/mydocs>.

Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines



USDA in Montana reminds agricultural producers of important Farm Service Agency (FSA) program dates. Contact your local service center to apply and with any questions. Visit online at farmers.gov and fsa.usda.gov/mt.

July 15, 2022: Deadline for FSA Maps – 2022 Acreage Reporting/Crop Certification for Annually Seeded Spring Crops, Spring Seeded Alfalfa Seed, Forage Seeding, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Perennial Forage not covered under the NAP, and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date. *This is the final date that FSA can accept late-filed 2021 reports for these crops.*

July 15, 2022: Last day of Primary Nesting Season (can affect CRP Grazing)

July 16, 2022: CRP Haying can begin and first day of CRP Summer Grazing (requires prior approval).

Aug. 5, 2022: Deadline to enroll in CRP CLEAR30.

Aug. 31, 2022: Last day to bale hay on CRP for Non-emergency and Emergency Haying (requires prior approval).

Sept. 30, 2022: Deadline to enroll in Continuous CRP programs, including SAFE

Oct. 31, 2022: Deadline to enroll in Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program (OTECP) and Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

Jan. 30, 2023: Deadline to request all ELAP assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

Jan. 30, 2023: Deadline to request LFP assistance for 2022 calendar year losses.

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when loss is apparent for **livestock and farm-raised fish** losses.

ELAP notice of loss must be filed within **15 days** of when loss is apparent for **honeybee** losses.

LIP notice of loss must be filed within **30 days** of when the loss is apparent.

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Nominations Open for 2022 FSA County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in the County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. Contact your [local FSA office](#) for information about open county committee positions.

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

All nomination forms for the 2022 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by Aug. 1, 2022. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: *Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member* available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.

To be eligible to serve on an FSA county committee, a person must participate or cooperate in a program administered by FSA, be eligible to vote in a county committee election and reside in the LAA in which the person is a candidate. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received FSA program benefits.

Farmers and ranchers may nominate themselves or others. Organizations representing minorities and women also may nominate candidates. To become a candidate, an eligible individual must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Nationwide, there are approximately 7,800 farmers and ranchers serving on FSA county committees. These individuals make decisions on disaster and conservation programs, emergency programs, commodity price support loan programs and other agricultural issues.

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NRCS Offers Flood Damage Assessment Assistance to Montana Ag Producers

Local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel in Montana are currently assessing flood damage on private lands. Contact the local USDA service center for information about assistance in your area.

District conservationists in counties that have experienced recent flooding can help landowners evaluate potential alternatives to reduce risk of further flood damage. This may include impacts to irrigation infrastructure, erosion, debris in stream channels, and more.

“Local communities and disaster and emergency services agencies have done an amazing job coming together to protect homes and public infrastructure immediately affected by the flooding,” said Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist for Montana. “NRCS has boots on the ground now where floodwaters have receded, and it is safe for our employees to enter the area to help with damage assessments on agricultural operations.”

NRCS can provide conservation planning and technical assistance that may help to mitigate or repair flood damage.

Contact your local NRCS office for more information. Find contact information at farmers.gov/contact.

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Disaster Assistance for 2022 Livestock Forage Losses in 38 Montana counties

38 MT Counties Triggered; U.S. Drought Monitor Updated Weekly

Livestock producers in **38 Montana counties** are eligible to apply for 2022 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on small grain, native pasture, improved pasture, annual ryegrass, and forage sorghum.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

The following 37 Montana counties have triggered the 2022 LFP drought criteria: **Beaverhead, Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Cascade, Chouteau, Daniels, Fergus, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lewis and Clark, Liberty, McCone, Madison, Meagher, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Pondera, Powder River, Powell, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Teton, Toole, Valley and Wheatland.** Producers must complete a CCC-853 and provide required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2023, for 2022 losses.

Producers in these counties are also eligible to apply for benefits under the 2022 Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) for losses relating to feed transportation, livestock transportation and water transportation costs. The deadline to file a Notice of Loss for livestock losses under ELAP is 30 days after the date that the loss is apparent. Applications for payment must be completed no later than January 30, 2023, for 2022 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the local USDA Service Center and visit www.farmers.gov or fsa.usda.gov/mt.

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USDA Offers Water Quality-Focused Program That Builds on CRP Contracts

Producers may apply for CLEAR30 through August 5, 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing the signup period for its Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers initiative (CLEAR30) — a nationwide opportunity for certain landowners and agricultural producers currently implementing water quality practices through the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) to enroll in 30-year contracts, extending the lifespan and strengthening the benefits of important water quality practices on their land.

Producers may apply for CLEAR30, a voluntary, incentive-based conservation program, **through Aug. 5, 2022.**

Cropland and certain pastureland currently enrolled in Continuous CRP or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and dedicated to an eligible water quality practice such as riparian buffers, contour strips, grass waterways or wetland restoration may be eligible if their contracts are expiring by September 30, 2022.

CLEAR30 contracts will be effective beginning Oct. 1, 2022. These long-term contracts ensure that conservation practices remain in place for 30 years, which improves water quality through reducing sediment and nutrient runoff and helping prevent algal blooms. Conservation in riparian areas also provides important carbon sequestration benefits. Traditional CRP contracts run from 10 to 15 years.

About CLEAR30

CLEAR30 was established in the 2018 Farm Bill to better address water quality concerns. Originally, CLEAR30 was only available in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watersheds; in 2021, FSA made CLEAR30 available to agricultural producers and landowners nationwide, and participation grew nearly seven-fold from 2020 to 2021.

Annual rental payments for landowners who enroll in CLEAR30 will be equal to the current Continuous CRP annual payment rate plus a **20** percent water quality incentive payment and an annual rental rate adjustment of **27.5** percent.

How to Sign Up

To sign up for CLEAR30, landowners and producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) by **Aug. 5, 2022.** Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

More Information

CLEAR30 is an option available through CRP, which is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. CRP was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and stabilize commodity prices by taking environmentally sensitive lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing numerous conservation and economic benefits. In addition to CLEAR30, signups are also open for [Continuous CRP](#) and [Grassland CRP](#).

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USDA Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023. USDA's new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements, which is part of USDA's broader effort to transform the food system to create a more level playing field for small and medium producers and a more balanced, equitable economy for everyone working in food and agriculture.

Specialty crop operations can apply for assistance for eligible expenses related to a 2022 food safety certificate issued on or after June 21, 2022, beginning June 27, 2022. USDA is delivering FSCSC to provide critical assistance for specialty crop operations, with an emphasis on equity in program delivery while building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions. Vilsack made the announcement from Hollis, N.H., where he toured a local, family-owned farm and highlighted USDA's efforts to help reduce costs for farmers and support local economies by providing significant funding to cut regulatory costs and increase market opportunities for farmers in New Hampshire and across the nation.

Program Details

FSCSC will assist specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023. For each year, FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing their certification, as well as a portion of their related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2022 (issued on or after June 21, 2022) or 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at farmers.gov/food-safety.

Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2022 is June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date. FSA will issue payments at the time of application approval for 2022 and after the application period ends for 2023. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Producers can visit farmers.gov/food-safety for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

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USDA Seeks Proposals for Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership due Aug. 5

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and Forest Service to collaborate with partners such as agricultural producers and forest landowners to invest in conservation and restoration at a big enough scale to make a difference.

Proposals are developed through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and local partners. Past partners have included county, state, non-governmental, Tribal, utilities or private individual stakeholders.

Project proposals are due by Aug. 5, 2022, for the 2023 fiscal year. See the [news release](#) and contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

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USDA Seeks Applications for Two National Funding Competitions to Support Community Agriculture and Strengthen Food Security

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making \$43.1 million available this year for two national-level funding competitions that support community agriculture. Projects funded will strengthen the food supply chain and transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient. Specifically, USDA is investing \$10.2 million in new cooperative agreements to expand compost and food waste reduction efforts; and \$14.2 million in new grants to support the development of community agriculture and innovative production projects.

Applications for Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements are due Sept. 1, 2022.

Applications for Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants are due Aug. 2, 2022.

[Learn more about both opportunities.](#)

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USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with the Name County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline. July 15 is a major reporting date for many crops.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).

- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made. Check with FSA at the local USDA Service Center for more information on continuous certification.

New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and these video tutorials.

More Information

For questions, please contact your [local FSA office](#).

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RMA Announces Greater Flexibilities for Crop Insurance Reporting

Specialty crop producers can now benefit from greater flexibility to use their own records to meet crop insurance reporting requirements. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing revisions that will make it easier for specialty crop producers and others who sell through direct marketing channels to obtain insurance, report their annual production, and file a claim.

"Farming and ranching are inherently complex and often challenging occupations, so anything and everything we can do to streamline processes and requirements are essential," said Marcia Bunger, Administrator of

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA). "Crop insurance plays a critical role in a farmer's operation and how they manage their risk and we're here to help. Optimizing reporting requirements for direct marketers or vertically integrated operations will help make insurance easier and more accessible for countless producers, including those who grow specialty crops and are an important part of our local and regional food systems."

Changes include:

- A new marketing certification that allows producers to self-identify if they will not have disinterested third-party records, when required, and enables them to use their own supporting production records. This will benefit direct marketers and vertically integrated producers since they often do not have disinterested third-party records.
- Allowing producers to use their own records, thereby limiting the need for Approved Insurance Providers (AIP) preharvest appraisals as a supporting record.

Before these changes, RMA generally required disinterested third-party records and AIPs may have conducted preharvest appraisals as a supporting production record.

These updates also improve transparency in the producer's policy by adding production reporting definitions, listing the 30-day appeal deadline for good farming practice determinations, clarifying where a producer can find information in the policy, and updating terminology to be consistent across the policy.

These revisions and other updates come through the [Crop Insurance Reporting and Other Changes Final Rule](#) published today by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation. This Final Rule will update the Common Crop Insurance Provisions Basic Provisions, Area Risk Protection Insurance Basic Provisions, and includes changes to individual Crop Provisions. Twenty Crop Provisions will be publicly released on June 30, 2022.

More Information

[Specialty crops](#) and their producers are a priority at RMA. Federal crop insurance coverage for specialty crops has grown steadily over the past 15 years with individual crop insurance programs now available for dozens of specialty crops.

These latest updates and flexibilities build on other RMA efforts to simplify reporting requirements for specialty crop producers and better serve those who sell through direct marketing. RMA implemented changes to Whole-Farm Revenue Protection for the 2021 crop year that streamline revenue reporting for producers who direct market two or more commodities. Additionally, the new Micro Farm option was rolled out beginning with the 2022 crop year specifically for producers who sell locally, including direct marketing. It reduces reporting requirements, providing more access to the program.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under 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 usda.gov.

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USDA Accepts More than 3.1 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup

Montana adds more than 215,000 accepted acres to the Grassland CRP Signup total

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting offers for more than 3.1 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grassland Signup, the highest in history. The signup's results include **215,000** acres in **Montana**. This program allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity and conservation, and it's part of the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to address climate change and to conserve natural resources.

Nationwide, this year's Grassland CRP signup surpassed last year's 2.5 million acres by 22%. So far this year, producers have enrolled 2 million acres through the General Signup and more than 464,000 acres have been submitted through the Continuous CRP Signup. This means about 5.6 million acres are entering CRP in 2023, surpassing the 3.9 million acres expiring this year.

Other highlights include:

- Top states included Colorado (642,000 acres), South Dakota (nearly 425,000 acres) and Nebraska (nearly 422,000 acres).
- States with the highest increase in acres compared with last year include Arizona (141% increase), California (129% increase), and Utah (122% increase).

Because Grassland CRP supports not only grazing operations but also biodiversity and conserving environmentally sensitive land such as that prone to wind erosion, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) created two [National Priority Zones](#) in 2021: the Greater Yellowstone Migration Corridor and Dust Bowl Zone. For this year's signup, FSA expanded the Greater Yellowstone Wildlife Migration Corridor Priority Zone to include seven additional counties across Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, to help protect the big-game animal migration corridor associated with Wyoming elk, mule deer and antelope. FSA accepted offers on more than 1.4 million acres in these two zones.

Grasslands enrolled in CRP 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 ag production.

Broadening Reach of Program

As part of the Agency's Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are historically underserved, including beginning farmers and military veterans, will receive 10 additional ranking points to enhance their offers. From more than 5,000 underserved producers, USDA accepted offers of more than 1.9 million acres, about 87% of those who submitted applications.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#) (CREP) to engage historically underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments, and non-profit entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

Producers can still make an offer to participate in CRP through the [Continuous CRP Signup](#), which is ongoing, by contacting the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

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Conservation Practice Adoption and Motivations Survey Underway

The Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey is now underway. This survey is a joint project between USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) aimed at assessing the adoption rates of different conservation practices. Survey data will be used to guide the implementation of NRCS programs in the future. The data collection period runs from May 30 to August 19.

There are four different conservation categories which are surveyed: crop practices, grazing practices, confined livestock practices, and forestry practices. Each category will have a questionnaire that has been designed to gather information specific to the practices involved in each category.

NASS is sending questionnaires for crop practices and confined livestock practices in 2022. Questionnaires for grazing practices and forestry practices will be sent in 2024.

If you received a survey, please respond securely online at agcounts.usda.gov, using the 12-digit survey code mailed with the survey. Producers responding online will now use NASS's new Respondent Portal. On the portal, producers can complete their surveys, access data visualizations and reports of interest, link to other USDA agencies, get a local weather update and more. Completed questionnaires may also be mailed back in the prepaid envelope provided.

Results from both versions of the survey will be available Sept. 15, 2022, at nass.usda.gov and in NASS's Quick Stats database at quickstats.nass.usda.gov.

[Learn more.](#)

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USDA Provides Local Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

The first 10 years of a farming or ranching operation are tough. USDA recognizes you need dedicated support to help make sense of all the information coming your way. Now each state has a Beginning Farmer and Rancher team headed up by a state coordinator. The coordinator helps producers who have operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 years navigate USDA and partner resources.

To find your Montana coordinator, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers/coordinators/. For more beginning farmer and rancher information, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers.

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FSA Offers Drought Assistance for Livestock Producers Through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP)

If you've suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought, you may be eligible for financial assistance through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP).

For eligible producers in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock;
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock,
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.*

**Hauling livestock one-way, and no payment for “empty miles.”*

Eligible livestock include cattle, buffalo, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where the qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

For ELAP water transportation assistance, a producer must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where the producer had adequate livestock watering systems or facilities in place before the drought occurred and where they do not normally require the transportation of water. Payments are for costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, equipment, and/or contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. The ELAP payment formula uses a national average price per gallon.

ABOVE NORMAL COSTS OF TRANSPORTING FEED

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year.

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed and/or grazing in drought-impacted areas. Assistance for Livestock transportation is retroactive to 2021 and available for 2022 and subsequent years. **For those interested in this provision for 2021, the deadline to apply for assistance is June 30, 2022. Please contact your county FSA office for additional details.**

For calendar year 2022 forward, producers must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office **within 30 calendar days** of when the loss is apparent; producers should contact their county FSA office as soon as the loss of water resources or feed resources are known. For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage/grazing acres.

ELAP also offers assistance to producers impacted by wildfire. Contact your county FSA office for more information on ELAP resources for wildfire losses. In addition, beekeepers also can benefit from ELAP provisions and should contact their county FSA office within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. For more information regarding ELAP visit fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

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USDA Updates Livestock Insurance Options to Offer Better Protection, Flexibility

USDA has updated three key crop insurance options for livestock producers: the Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP), Livestock Gross Margin (LGM), and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP). USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) revised the insurance options to reach more producers, offer greater flexibility for protecting

their operations, and ultimately, better meet the needs of the country's swine, dairy, and cattle producers. The updates were published last week for the 2023 crop year, which begins July 1, 2022.

DRP is designed to insure against unexpected declines in the quarterly revenue from milk sales relative to a guaranteed coverage level; LGM protects against the loss of gross margin (or livestock's market value minus feed costs); and LRP provides protection against price declines.

Producers will now have more flexibility for DRP, LGM, and LRP, when indemnities are used to pay premiums, which can help producers manage their operation's cash flow. With these updates, producers can now have both LGM and LRP policies, although they cannot insure the same class of livestock for the same time period or have the same livestock insured under multiple policies.

Additional updates by insurance option include:

Dairy Revenue Protection

- Dairy producers are now able to continue coverage even if they experience a disaster, such as a barn fire, at their operation.

Livestock Gross Margin

- Cattle, Dairy, and Swine coverage has been expanded, making it available in all counties in all 50 states.

Livestock Risk Protection

- Insurance companies are now required to pay indemnities within 30 days, rather than the previous 60 days, following the receipt of the claim form.
- Head limits have been increased:
 - Fed Cattle: 12,000 head per endorsement and 25,000 head per crop year
 - Feeder Cattle: 12,000 head per endorsement and 25,000 head per crop year
 - Swine: 70,000 head per endorsement and 750,000 head per crop year
- The termination date under LRP has been extended from June 30 to August 31
- Location reporting requirements have been relaxed to list only state and county, instead of the precise legal location.

Learn more on [RMA's Livestock Insurance Plans webpage](#). Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#).

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Top 6 Emergency Relief Program Checklist Items for Eligible Farmers

FSA recently began mailing 303,000 pre-filled applications for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), a new program designed to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms, and other qualifying natural disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

The past few years have been tough to say the least. As producers have dealt with the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have also struggled to recover from more frequent, more intense natural disasters. I am grateful that Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law the *Extending*

Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43), which includes \$10 billion in critical emergency relief.

After extensive stakeholder outreach, including with producers and groups that have not always been included in USDA programs, our team began work developing a responsive, easier-to-access program that could be rolled out in phases. We're now rolling out the first phase of ERP, which uses existing [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) data as the basis for calculating initial payments.

By leveraging existing data, we will be able to deliver approximately \$6 billion in assistance on a faster timeline; at the same time, my team and I are committed to ensuring that producers who do not have existing data on file with USDA are captured in the second phase of ERP, which will be explicitly focused on filling gaps in previously implemented emergency assistance.

To apply for ERP Phase 1, here's what you need to do:

1. Check Your Mailbox

The form being mailed to you includes eligibility requirements, outlines the application process, and provides estimated ERP payment calculations. Producers will receive a separate application form for each program year in which an eligible loss occurred. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP phase one payment. This application takes about 0.176 hours (that's less than 15 minutes) for producers to complete, compared to the former Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus application which took several hours for producers to complete and even longer for FSA staff.

The deadline to return completed ERP applications to FSA is **Friday, July 22, 2022**. *If you have NAP coverage, you will receive pre-filled ERP applications later this summer. Details on ERP Phase 2 will be forthcoming as well.*

2. Check Your Eligibility

ERP covers losses to crops, trees, bushes, and vines due to a qualifying natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligible crops include all crops for which crop insurance or NAP coverage was available, except for crops intended for grazing. Qualifying natural disaster events include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought*, and related conditions.

**Lists of [2020](#) and [2021](#) drought counties eligible for ERP are available online.*

3. Check Required Forms on File with FSA

Producers must have the following forms on file with FSA:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities*(if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs*(if applicable).
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

If you have previously participated in FSA programs, you will likely have these required forms on file. However, if you're uncertain or want to confirm the status of your forms, contact your [local FSA county office](#).

4. Check Historically Underserved Status with FSA, If Applicable

The ERP payment percentage for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, and ranchers will be increased by 15% of the calculated ERP payment.

To qualify for the higher payment percentage, eligible producers must have the following form on file with FSA:

- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*.

5. **Check Your Future Insurance Coverage**

All producers who receive ERP phase one payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, for the next two available crop years, as determined by the Secretary.

Coverage requirements will be determined from the date a producer receives an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of crop insurance or NAP for a producer's particular crops. The final crop year to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage to meet the second year of coverage for this requirement is the 2026 crop year.

6. **Check Your bank**

Once the completed ERP application for payment is submitted to and signed by FSA, producers who have direct deposit should look for payment within three business days.

More Information

We have additional resources, including:

- [ERP May 16, 2022 New Release](#)
- [ERP Fact Sheet](#)
- [Answers to Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Emergency Relief Webpage](#)
- [ERP Notice of Funding Availability](#)

In addition to ERP, FSA is also implementing the first phase of the new Emergency Livestock Relief Program. At this time, FSA has made more than \$588 million in payments to impacted livestock producers.

Bottom line, we take your feedback seriously, and we wanted to deliver this relief as soon as possible. We learned from previous relief programs, and we're excited to be getting this to you as swiftly as we can.

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Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

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Report Shows Economic Value of Farm Bill Conservation Easements

This new publication is a partnership among the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Montana Association of Land Trusts, and the Heart of the Rockies Initiative. The report analyzes the economic impact of conservation easements in Montana. In particular, the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program which was created in the 2014 Farm Bill and is designed for farmers and ranchers to work with the NRCS and land trusts across the country to conserve farm and ranch lands, strengthen America's food production, and protect wildlife habitat through voluntary conservation easements. A conservation easement is a private property right utilized by a landowner that typically restricts development of the land but maintains almost all agricultural management options and opportunities. The report shows:

- Between 2014 and 2021 the NRCS, farm and ranch families, and land trusts (or state agency) teamed up to invest \$109 million from the Farm Bill ALE program to conserve 289,000 acres of ag lands in 22 Montana counties.
- Every ALE Farm Bill dollar allocated to farm and ranch conservation yielded \$1.89 of economic activity, nearly doubling the positive impact of the Farm Bill funding.
- 95% of the allocated funds were used to directly assist with farm and ranch agricultural operations and expansion, farm and ranch family succession planning, business strength and stability, and direct purchase of farm and ranch equipment.
- These dollars produced a total economic impact of \$182 million for Montana's economy, supported 1,057 local jobs and \$41.5 million in labor income, and contributed \$99 million to Montana's Gross Domestic Product.

Find the full report on the [Montana Association of Land Trusts](#), [Heart of the Rockies Initiative](#), or [NRCS](#) websites.

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Inform FSA Promptly of All Changes in Farming Operation and Contact Information

It is important to promptly report any changes in your farming operation to FSA. These changes can include, but are not limited to, changes in your address, phone, or email, name changes, changes to entity membership or shares, formation or dissolution of any entity (such as a trust, partnership, LLC, LLP or corporation) that owns or operates land or owns other farming assets used in your operation, sale or purchase of land, adding or dropping leases, and any changes to financing or equipment. Participants in FSA and NRCS programs are required to timely report changes in their farming operation to their local FSA office in writing and update their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan with necessary changes, as applicable. Failure to timely notify your local FSA office may result in ineligibility for program benefits, or delays in issuance of program payments. If you have any updates or corrections to your records, please call your local FSA office to update your records.

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FSA's Ongoing Notice of Loss Requirements

It's important for agricultural producers to report losses immediately as all disaster programs are dependent on the timely reporting of the loss. A notice of loss can be filed with USDA Farm Service Agency via phone, email, fax or scheduled office visit.

- **ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program:** Producers will have **15 days** from when the loss is first apparent, to file a **honeybee** notice of loss. This change provides consistency between ELAP and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, which also has a 15-day notice of loss period for honey. **For other covered livestock losses**, including livestock feed, grazing and farm-raised fish losses, the notice of loss deadline for ELAP will remain **30 days** from when the loss is first apparent to the producer.
- **LIP - Livestock Indemnity Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **30** calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. Producers should document the adverse weather conditions and date(s) of weather events.
- **TAP - Tree Assistance Program:** Final Date to Submit an Application and Supporting Documentation within 90 calendar days of: the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent to the producer.
- **NAP – Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program:** Submit Notice of Loss within **15** calendar days of the earlier of a natural disaster occurrence, the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster, the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date. **Note:** A producer's signature is required on form CCC-576 when a Notice of Loss is submitted.

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage:

NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

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Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

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From September 2021 through July 2022, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Montana Watershed Coordination Council and partners are reaching out across the state to ask: What more might be done to better support farmers and ranchers in managing soils in Montana?

The purpose is to increase the pace and scale at which land stewards implement voluntary practices and systems to maintain and improve soil health, and thereby the long term economic and ecological vitality of agriculture in Montana. In August of 2022 a report will be shared on what was learned along with any recommendations that seem to emerge. All responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

[Learn how to participate.](#)

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Emergency Loans Available in Montana

FSA's Emergency Loan Program is available for agricultural producers in counties designated as primary or contiguous natural disaster areas. See map below of current Disaster Designations in Montana. Contact your local FSA office for specific designations in your area and time frames to apply. Eligible producers have **eight months** from the date of the disaster designation to apply for low-interest emergency loans to 1.) restore or replace essential property; 2.) pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year; 3.) pay essential family living expenses; or 4.) refinance certain debts, excluding real estate. Producers interested in applying for an emergency loan, or other FLP loans, should contact their local FSA office to set up an appointment with the Farm Loan Program staff serving your area.

- [Montana Disaster Designation Information](#)
- [Emergency Farm Loans](#)
- [Farm Loan Programs](#)

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Montana

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FSA Policy Reminders: [2021 Annual Notification to FSA Customers](#)

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ERIC BASHORE

Contact information for your local office, visit: www.farmers.gov.