



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - April 2022

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## A Message from Your USDA Nebraska Leadership

We've had the opportunity to travel over the past couple of weeks, and it's been good to see planters rolling in the fields across Nebraska. While the weather – mainly the extreme wind – has rightly dominated our conversations, it's good to remember that the business of agriculture marches on.

### WILDFIRES AND DROUGHT

Wildfires and drought also have been, unfortunately, dominating the conversation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help Nebraska farmers and livestock producers. For example, Farm Service Agency has programs that can help eligible producers with some financial assistance for loss of

grazing, loss of feedstuffs, deceased livestock, restoration of fencing, and other specific needs due to wildfire and/or drought.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may be able to provide technical assistance and funding for deferred grazing and to establish cropland cover by planting cover crops. Applications for assistance are accepted at any time but must be received prior to implementing a conservation practice and will be held by NRCS pending available funding.

The key thing to remember for both FSA and NRCS program assistance is to contact your local USDA Service Center sooner rather than later to report losses and learn more about program options available. They will do their best to help you understand the programs and what is needed for eligibility and to apply.

Please read the article below for an outline of FSA program options available.

### **ACREAGE REPORTING**

For much of the state, producers are in the fields planting. Please remember that FSA offices will be requesting your assistance with spring acreage certification. Acreage certification is a requirement to maintain your eligibility for safety net and some disaster programs. The acreage certification deadline is not until July 15, but many offices start the process now by providing you with maps to help you track the details needed to complete the certification paperwork. Please work with your county FSA office to timely complete this process.

That's all for this month.

--John Berge, FSA State Executive Director and Rob Lawson, NRCS State Conservationist

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## **USDA Offers Wildfire Recovery Assistance**

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers disaster assistance to aid eligible producers impacted by recent wildfires across the state.

Available programs can include:

- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses such as grazing loss, purchased or produced feed loss, additional cost of purchasing feed above normal quantities, and cost for transporting feed directly to livestock (i.e. equipment rental).
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; includes fence loss.
- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** - provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory,

or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters including excessive wind and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing).

- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disasters including excessive wind and qualifying drought.

For more information on these programs, contact your County USDA Service Center. To find your Service Center [please click here](#).

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## FSA, NRCS to Present on Drought Assistance Resources During May 12 Webinar

Nebraska USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide an overview of USDA drought assistance programs during a webinar scheduled for **Thursday, May 12**. The webinar is part of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Agricultural Profitability webinar series devoted to topics for farm and ranch management, profitability, economics and farm survival. **It will begin at 12 p.m. CT, and those interested in participating can register at <http://cap.unl.edu/webinars>.**

Nebraska FSA Price Support, Conservation and Environmental Programs Chief Pat Lechner and Nebraska NRCS Outreach Coordinator Brach Johnson will provide an overview of USDA drought assistance programs. The webinar will be moderated by Brad Lubben, UNL associate professor and Extension policy specialist. Randy Saner, UNL beef systems Extension educator, also will present during the webinar.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in the webinar should contact the Nebraska FSA State Office at (402) 437-5581 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339, or email [bobbie.krizwickham@usda.gov](mailto:bobbie.krizwickham@usda.gov) by Monday, May 9.

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## FSA Encourages Producers to Complete Certification of Grazing Land Acres

*Certification Part of Livestock Forage Disaster Program Eligibility Requirements*

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is reminding producers that annual acreage reporting is an important eligibility requirement to receive financial benefits through the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), as well as a number of other FSA-administered programs. LFP has triggered in a number of Nebraska counties already and may trigger in others as the grazing season officially begins on May 1. To see which counties have triggered, [click on this link](#).

The next deadline for annual acreage reporting in Nebraska is July 15, 2022. This includes common spring-planted crops, such as corn, soybeans, wheat, and grain sorghum, but also includes perennial grass (pasture) and Conservation Reserve Program acres. Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note

that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is July 15, 2022, or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Even though the acreage reporting deadline is months away, FSA is encouraging producers with pasture acres and acres planted for grazing purposes to complete certification of those acres as soon as possible to assist the office with preparations for potential program implementation.

LFP provides financial assistance to livestock producers and contract growers who also are producers of grazed forage crop acres (native and improved pasture and crops planted specifically for grazing purposes) and who have suffered a loss due to a qualifying drought during the grazing season. Other points regarding LFP and acreage certification:

- Producers must have a risk in the pasture or hay crop acres in order to complete the acreage certification process.
- In addition to the acreage reporting requirement, LFP applicants who lease acres must be able to support their application with either a written lease or an Annual Lease Certification (CCC-855).
- Producers who previously have certified grazing land through a continuous certification may want to contact the county FSA office to ensure that certification remains in place and reflects 2022 producers and shares.

Producers should contact their county FSA office for additional information on LFP and the acreage certification process.

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## Deadline Approaching for Application to Grassland CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages producers and landowners to enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). **The application deadline is May 13, 2022.**

Grassland CRP provides a unique opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners to keep land in agricultural production and supplement their income while improving their soils and permanent grass cover.

[Grassland CRP](#) is a federally funded voluntary working lands program. Through the program, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides annual rental payments to landowners to maintain and conserve grasslands while allowing producers to graze, hay, and produce seed on that land. Maintaining the existing permanent cover provides several benefits, including reducing erosion, providing wildlife habitat and migration corridors, and capturing and maintaining carbon in the soil and cover.

FSA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. The annual rental rate varies by county with a national minimum rental rate of \$13 per acre for this sign-up. Contract duration is 10 or 15 years.

Alongside Grassland CRP, producers and landowners can also 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). In Nebraska, FSA administers the Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP ([click here for details](#)) and the Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE ([click here for details](#)).

### **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.

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, non-profit, and private entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

### **More Information on CRP**

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before the May 13 deadline. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced 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**. Contact information can be found at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator). Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at [fsa.usda.gov/crp](https://fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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## FSA Loan Servicing, Other Organization Resources Available During Financial Stress

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

Farmers and ranchers also can access assistance through other entities in Nebraska that offer services during financially challenging times. **The Rural Response Hotline provides referral and support services for farmers, ranchers and rural residents and their families. The number to call is (800) 464-0258.**

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture manages the Negotiations Program, which offers mediation services for agricultural borrowers, creditors and USDA program participants. Through this program, participants also can access free one-on-one education on agricultural financial and legal matters. For information, call (402) 471-4876.

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## Disaster Set-Aside Program for Farm Loan Borrowers

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and relieves immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all

parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your county FSA office.

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## Do You Have a Plan for Conservation?

Whether you own hundreds of acres or just a few, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can help you develop a conservation plan to better manage the natural resources on your farm or ranch.

Whether you grow cash crops, produce vegetables, or raise poultry or livestock, it starts with a plan. The Natural Resources Conservation Service can provide feet-on-the ground assistance to help inventory your natural resources, point out areas that may need improvements, offer solutions, work with you to develop a plan of action, and assist in finding funding to help implement your conservation plan. This assistance is free and voluntary. It's up to you whether to do a conservation plan or not.

There are many benefits to having a plan: • Save money as your land becomes more productive; • Increase sustainability by protecting the natural resources that support your business; • Create open space and improve habitat for wildlife; • Conserve soil and water for periods of drought and future use; and • Save time, money, and labor.

A conservation plan combines your farming experience with the science-based knowledge of the conservation planner. It combines selected conservation practices and lays out a schedule for installing these practices that fits your operation.

Conservation planners provide the technical assistance needed to develop and implement your plan. NRCS planners can customize the plan to meet your goals which might include lowering production costs, increasing crop yields, improving soil health or water quality, conserving soil, increasing forage production, or providing water for livestock. You choose which options best fit your farm or ranch. Getting started is easy. Just call or stop by a local NRCS office. Together, we can find solutions to meet your land management goals.

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## April FSA Interest Rates

### **OPERATING/OWNERSHIP**

Farm Operating: 2.750%

Microloan Operating: 2.750%

Farm Ownership: 3.250%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.5%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%  
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.750%

#### **FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN**

3-year term: 1.875%  
5-year term: 1.875%  
7-year term: 2%  
10-year term: 2%  
12-year term: 2.125%

#### **MARKETING ASSISTANCE**

Commodity Loan: 2.125%

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## **Dates to Remember**

**April 29, 2022** - FSA deadline for applications to the Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP)

**May 13, 2022** – FSA deadline for contract offers for 2022 Grassland CRP signup

**May 30, 2022** – USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

**June 1, 2022** – 2021 FSA Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans and sunflower seed

**July 15, 2022** – FSA deadline to report all spring-seeded crops, perennial forage and Conservation Reserve Program acreage

**August 5, 2022** - FSA deadline for contract offers for CLEAR30 CRP special water quality initiative

*\*\*\*Please note the above NAP calendar references, if any, may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.*

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## **Avian Influenza in the United States: What You Need to Know**

To date, USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed the presence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks in several states, including Nebraska. Avian influenza viruses are classified as either "low pathogenic (LPAI)" or "highly pathogenic (HPAI)" based on their genetic features and the severity of the disease they cause in poultry. Caused by an influenza type A virus, HPAI can infect poultry (such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, domestic ducks, geese, and guinea fowl) and wild birds (especially waterfowl).

The clinical signs of birds affected with all forms of Avian Influenza may show one or more of the following:

- Sudden death without clinical signs
- Decreased water consumption up to 72 hours before other clinical signs



- Lack of energy and appetite
- Decreased egg production
- Soft-shelled or misshapen eggs
- Swelling of the head, eyelids, comb, wattles, and hocks
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing, sneezing
- Lack of coordination
- Diarrhea

In addition to the disease infecting domestic birds, it is important to know that wild birds can also be infected and show no signs of illness. They can carry the disease to new areas when migrating, potentially exposing domestic poultry to the virus. The [APHIS' wild bird surveillance program](#) provides an early warning system for the introduction and distribution of avian influenza viruses of concern in the United States, allowing APHIS and the poultry industry to take timely and rapid action.

With the recent detections of avian influenza in wild birds and domestic poultry in the United States, bird owners should review their biosecurity practices and stay vigilant to protect poultry and pet birds from transmission of this disease. The following bio-safety guidelines are effective methods for safeguarding commercial operations and smaller flocks:

- Backyard flock owners should practice strict biosecurity, including preventing birds from exposure and/or co-mingling with wild birds and other types of poultry.
- Shower, change clothes, and clean and disinfect footwear before entering your poultry housing areas.
- Respiratory protection such as a medical facemask would also be important and remember to always wear clean clothes when encountering healthy domestic birds.
- Carefully follow safe entry and exit procedures into your flock's clean area.
- Reduce the attractiveness for wild birds to stop at your place by cleaning up litter and spilled feed around poultry housing areas.
- If you have free range guinea fowl and waterfowl, consider bringing them into coops or flight pens under nets to prevent interaction of domesticated poultry with wild birds and their droppings.
- It is best to restrict visitors from interacting with your birds currently.
- Do not touch sick or dead wildlife and keep them away from domestic poultry
- Try not to handle sick or deceased domestic birds (if you must, use proper personal protective equipment to minimize direct contact and cautiously disinfect anything that comes into contact with the deceased and or sick bird).

Sick or deceased domestic birds should be reported to your local veterinarian. Positive domestic cases are handled by APHIS and its partners. States that have confirmed cases of Avian Influenza should work closely with USDA-APHIS on surveillance, reporting and

control efforts. If you do not raise domestic birds or have a poultry operation but you encounter sick or dead wild birds, please use bio-safety measures, and report your findings through USDA's toll-free number at 1-866-536-7593.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, this strain of Avian Influenza is a low risk to the public. While the transmission rate from animals to humans is low, it is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be shared between species. To learn more about Avian Influenza and to remain up to date on the latest related news and information, you can visit the USDA [APHIS webpage](#).



## Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Information

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