



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - May 2023

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A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director

I noted this last month but want to remind you that our county FSA offices are busy with spring acreage certification and need to hear from you as soon as you are done with planting. We have thousands and thousands of you to get through the acreage reporting process before the July 17 deadline so the sooner you can contact us, the better. This also includes those of you with perennial forage (pasture) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres.

While I am on the subject of deadlines, this is just a quick reminder that the contract offer period for Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ends Friday, May 26. If you are interested in this working lands CRP, you should contact your county FSA office as soon as possible.

USDA recently announced some new flexibilities in its disaster programs to help address impacts to livestock operations in 2022 and 2023 due to natural disasters such as drought and extreme winter storms. Generally speaking, the deadline to apply for certain benefits has been extended to June 2, 2023. Read the article below for additional information and then contact your county FSA office if you believe the changes might apply to you.

Another article below highlights some new flexibilities for certain producers to access basic coverage through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). NAP works similar to crop insurance but for crops for which there is no commercially available insurance. If you are considered an underserved producer and have a form CCC 860 on file with us certifying to such, you may be eligible for NAP coverage, at no cost, and potential financial benefits for 2022 and for 2023. Read the Administrator's message below for details.

While many areas of the state have received some precipitation, the reality is that most of Nebraska is still in a significant drought. In many areas, the drought is significant enough to have triggered FSA program assistance. Learn more about the resources available through FSA by [viewing this recorded webinar](#), and then contact your county FSA office for additional information.

That's all for this month. Talk to you in June.

--Tim Divis

Grassland CRP Signup Deadline Nears

Agricultural producers and private landowners can apply for the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) **through May 26, 2023**, at Farm Service Agency offices across the state. Among CRP enrollment opportunities, Grassland CRP is unique as a *working lands program*, allowing producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and promoting plant and animal biodiversity and conservation.

Protecting grasslands with CRP not only benefits participants with annual rental payments and cost share assistance; it also contributes positively to the economy of many regions, builds biodiversity, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits to deliver lasting climate outcomes.

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP, or any other CRP enrollment option, should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for the program. A recorded webinar reviewing the program also can provide more information and can be [found at this link](#).

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the [Transition Incentives Program \(TIP\)](#), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning,

veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

USDA Offers Livestock Disaster Program Flexibilities in Response to Those Impacted by Drought, Winter Storms

Program Application Deadlines Extended to June 2

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing additional flexibilities and further enhancing disaster recovery assistance provided by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#), [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) and [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) in response to needs expressed by livestock producers who have experienced significant feed, forage, animal and infrastructure loss from pre-existing, long-term drought conditions further compounded by unprecedented snowfall and winter storms. **These livestock disaster program policy enhancements include an extended June 2, 2023, deadline to submit notices of loss and applications for payment for 2022 losses.** The deadline extension and program flexibilities are available to eligible producers nationwide who incurred losses from a qualifying natural disaster event.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) is available to eligible producers who have suffered above normal expenses for hauling feed or water to livestock or hauling livestock to forage/grazing acres due to the impacts of drought. ELAP also may be available to assist with the above normal costs of feed during natural disasters, including during extreme winter weather. ELAP triggers on a county-by-county basis.

Normal ELAP policy is that, as part of the application process, producers must report these impacts to FSA within 30 days of when those impacts are apparent. However, this 30-day notification requirement has been waived in some situations to allow for late applications for 2022 impacts and for 2023 impacts that occur before June 2, 2023. Producers with questions about possible benefits through ELAP for 2022 impacts or 2023 impacts through June 2, 2023, should contact their county FSA office.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died, above normal mortality, because of a qualifying natural disaster event. Normal LIP policy is that, as part of the application process, producers must report these deaths to FSA within 30 days of when these deaths are known. This 30-day notification requirement has been waived for 2022 losses. FSA is now accepting 2022 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) notices of loss and applications for payment through June 2, 2023, for all covered livestock that may have been eligible in 2022.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides benefits for grazing losses due to a qualifying drought or wildfire. FSA recently revised the program to allow additional animals as qualified for the program, including livestock that contribute to the commercial viability of an operation and are maintained for the purpose of pleasure, roping, pets or show. Because of this change, FSA is accepting LFP applications for these newly eligible

covered livestock through June 2, 2023. Producers who have questions about whether their livestock may be eligible for LFP should contact their county FSA office.

Revising 2022 Applications

Producers who have a 2022 ELAP, LIP or LFP application on file with FSA as of the program deadline or were placed on an approved register, may revise their application with the newly updated eligible livestock no later than June 2, 2023.

More Information

Producers can apply for ELAP, LFP and LIP benefits at their local FSA county office. For more information or to submit a notice of loss or an application for payment, please contact your [local FSA office](#) or visit farmers.gov/recover.

USDA Simplifies Application Process for Noninsured Crops for Underserved Producers; Improves Risk Management Accessibility

A message from FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux

Earlier this year, we made several updates to disaster assistance programs to give more farmers, ranchers, and Tribes equitable access to recovery programs administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Specifically, I'd like to point out changes made to the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and how we've simplified the application process for underserved producers.

This important policy change opens the door to risk management options for producers who may not have previously known about or been able to obtain coverage to protect their crops.

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when natural disaster events cause low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting.

Our policy improvements mean that, beginning with the 2022 crop year, having a CCC-860 form, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, on file with FSA will provide producers with basic NAP coverage for all eligible crops. Specifically, FSA is waiving all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage for producers with a CCC-860 on file prior to the application closing date for each crop. These producers are also eligible to receive a 50% premium reduction if they elect higher levels of coverage before the application closing date for each crop.

At the end of January, we notified producers who already have the CCC-860 certification form on file regarding their eligibility for NAP basic coverage for 2022. If you suffered losses from natural disasters in 2022, you will need to contact your local FSA county office to file an acreage report, as well as a notice of loss, and an application for a NAP payment.

If you are interested in NAP coverage for 2023 and future years, your local FSA county office staff will be more than happy to provide information on eligibility, coverage options, and how to apply for additional coverage.

While these recent policy changes are intended to remove barriers to available benefits and help underserved producers manage risk, any producer of noninsurable crops can apply for NAP coverage by completing FSA form [CCC-471](#), Application for Coverage, and paying a service fee. Your local FSA office can verify application closing dates and ensure coverage for your crops is available.

My staff and I are committed to revisiting FSA program policies and finding ways, within our authorities, to remove obstacles that prevent participation. Expanding NAP to ensure all producers of noninsured crops have access to risk coverage is the result of proactive input from producers and the willingness of FSA employees to think outside of the box for the benefit of the producers we serve.

Please contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) for more information on NAP coverage options.

CLEAR30 Offers Producers with Expiring CRP Option for Additional Contract

Agricultural producers and landowners with certain expiring [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) contracts can receive additional rental incentives and extend that land's role in conservation for another 30 years. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has opened the signup period for its Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers enrollment (CLEAR30) **now through July 31, 2023**.

CLEAR30 is a part of the CLEAR initiative, which prioritizes water quality practices as a part of Continuous CRP enrollment, and is one of several CRP enrollment opportunities. CLEAR30 allows producers and landowners enrolling certain water quality practices to enroll in 30-year contracts, extending the lifespan and strengthening the benefits of important water quality practices on their land. Like other CRP enrollments, CLEAR30 is a voluntary, incentive-based conservation opportunity offered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Cropland and certain pastureland that is currently enrolled in Continuous CRP or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and is also dedicated to an eligible water quality practice, such as the establishment of riparian buffers, contour strips, or grass waterways, may be eligible for CLEAR30 if their contracts are expiring by September 30, 2023.

CLEAR30 contracts will be effective beginning October 1, 2023. These long-term contracts ensure that conservation practices remain in place for 30 years, which improves water quality by 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.

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 **July 31, 2023**. Contact information can be found at farmers.gov/service-locator. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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.

To find out if your county has triggered for this program and to learn more, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

FSA Has Farm Storage Facility Loan Option

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.

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 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 County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

May FSA Loan Interest Rates

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Operating: 5%

Operating – Microloan: 5%

Farm Ownership: 5%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 3%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.5%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.750%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 3.75%

5-year term: 3.5%

7-year term: 3.5%

10-year term: 3.5%

12-year term: 3.5%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 5.625%

USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program Assists Organic Producers with Costs Associated with Organic Certification

OCCSP signup is open now until October 31, 2023

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will cover up to 75% of the costs associated with organic certification, up to \$750 per category, through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural

producers and handlers to apply for OCCSP by Oct. 31, 2023, for expenses incurred from Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2023.

As part of USDA's broader effort to support organic producers and in response to stakeholder feedback, this year FSA increased the cost share to the maximum amount allowed by statute.

Cost Share for 2023

The cost share provides financial assistance for organic certification, and producers and handlers are eligible to receive 75% of the costs, up to \$750, for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling and state organic program fees (California only).

Producers have until Oct. 31, 2023, to file applications, and FSA will make payments as applications are received.

How to Apply

To apply, organic producers and handlers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). As part of completing the OCCSP application, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses.

USDA Kicks Off Effort to Expand Market Opportunities for Climate-Smart Commodities, Learn from Pilot Projects

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the official kick-off of the implementation phase for projects funded through the \$3.1 billion Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities effort. Project partners are beginning work on formal implementation of the climate-smart production practices, marketing, and quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits that are funded through the effort as agreements are finalized on a rolling basis.

As projects get under way, USDA also is launching the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Learning Network (Partnerships Network), a collaboration of all the project partners, which will generate key lessons-learned as projects are implemented.

[Learn More](#)

Assistance Available for Nebraska Farmers and Ranchers Impacted by Wildfire



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has funding available to assist agricultural producers whose land was impacted by recent wildfires. Landowners have until May 31, 2023, to apply. Through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) funding is available to help producers plan and implement conservation practices on farms and ranches impacted by natural disasters.

EQIP funding is available to assist in this wildfire recovery effort by planting cover crops on impacted cropland and to defer grazing on rangeland. The application signup for this wildfire assistance is happening now and will run through **May 31, 2023**. Applications will be assessed, and even though some lands may be eligible for assistance, it is not guaranteed that all acres will receive financial assistance due to limited funding.

Interested landowners and operators should contact their [local NRCS office](#) in the USDA Service Center for applications and more information.

Federal Funding Available to Assist Nebraska's Agricultural Producers Transitioning to Organic

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska has funding available to assist Nebraska's agricultural producers with transitioning to organic production. Through the Organic Transition Initiative, NRCS Nebraska is accepting applications until June 15, 2023, from interested landowners for eligible conservation practices. Eligible practices for this initiative include organic management (required), conservation cover, conservation crop rotation, cover crops, nutrient management, and field borders. Interested landowners should speak to their [local NRCS Service Center](#) before June 15.

NRCS staff will create a conservation plan with the landowner to assess what conservation practices are best applied for organic transition. Applications for funding assistance will be ranked after June 15 to determine which projects have the highest conservation benefits. Those approved will be provided financial assistance.

Nationally, NRCS is dedicating \$70 million to assist producers with a new organic management standard under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Eligible producers include farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and other producers beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification. Higher payment rates and other options are available for underserved producers including historically underserved customers, Tribes, beginning farmers and ranchers, veterans, and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

Dates to Remember

May 26, 2023 – FSA deadline for contract offers for Grassland Conservation Reserve Program Signup 205

May 29, 2023 – USDA Service Center closed for federal holiday

May 31, 2023 – NRCS deadline to apply for assistance for agricultural land impacted by

wildfire through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

June 1, 2023 – 2022 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans, sunflower seed

June 2, 2023 – FSA deadline for applications to the Emergency Relief Program Phase 2 (ERP2) and the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP)

June 15, 2023 - NRCS deadline for applications for the Organic Transition Initiative

June 19, 2023 – USDA Service Center closed for federal holiday

July 17, 2023 – FSA deadline to report all spring-seeded crops, perennial forage and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres

July 31, 2023 – FSA deadline for enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) CLEAR30 Signup

****Please note any above NAP calendar reference 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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Visit the Nebraska NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne.

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