



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nebraska FSA and NRCS State Office Newsletter - July 2024

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A Message from the FSA Acting State Executive Director

On behalf of county Farm Service Agency offices across the state, I want to thank all of our farmer and rancher customers for your assistance with spring acreage certification, which had a deadline of July 15. Most of our offices have wrapped up, or are in the process of wrapping up, this annual activity.

USDA recently announced an **Aug. 14 application deadline** for the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). FSA began taking applications for this disaster assistance program

in October 2023. ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying calendar year 2022 natural disasters including wildfires, floods, excessive heat, tornadoes, freeze, and drought, among others. [You can read more details at this link.](#) Contact your county FSA office for more information and to apply ahead of the deadline.

We are nearing the Aug. 1 deadline for those interested in serving on their FSA County Committee to turn in their nomination forms. County committee members are local farmers and ranchers elected by their peers to serve in a role that advises the activities of their county FSA office. It's a great way to give back to your local agricultural community. If you are interested in learning more, call your county FSA office and ask for your county executive director. She or he will be able to take you through all the nomination requirements and assist with paperwork.

Our FSA staff across the state has been receiving questions from time to time from producers who are interested in learning about USDA's climate-smart commodity production projects. USDA is investing \$3.1 billion in 141 projects implemented by a variety of partners across the nation. Recently USDA announced availability of a dashboard that provides summaries of all the program options on a state-by-state basis. If you are interested in learning about these opportunities, go to <https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities/projects>. You also can check out the link in the article below to go to a "project dashboard" for additional, summarized information.

That's all for this month. I hope you've enjoyed the recent break in the heat as we slide into August.

--Tim Divis

Dates to Remember

Aug. 1, 2024 – FSA deadline for producers to request a farm transfer or a farm reconstitution

Aug. 1, 2024 – FSA deadline for producers to file nomination form for FSA County Committee candidacy

Aug. 14, 2024 - FSA deadline for Emergency Relief Program 2022 Track 1 and Track 2 applications

Sept. 2, 2024 - USDA Service Centers closed for federal holiday

****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.*

Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities By State



USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities effort is expanding markets for America's climate-smart commodities, leveraging the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production, and providing direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers.

Learn more about expanded markets, premiums and incentives for producing climate-smart commodities as well as cost share and technical assistance to implement climate-smart practices. [Find a project near you and get started today!](#)

USDA Sets August 14 Deadline for ERP 2022 Applications

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the deadline for commodity and specialty crop producers to apply for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) for 2022 natural disaster losses. The deadline is **Aug. 14, 2024**. Farm Service Agency (FSA) began accepting ERP 2022 applications in October 2023.

Through the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328) Congress allocated \$3.2 billion in funding to cover an estimated \$10 billion in uncovered crop losses.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

For more information on this program and how to apply [read the news release](#).

Farm Service Agency Seeking Nominations for Farmers, Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

Nomination Applications Due by Aug. 1

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by **Aug. 1, 2024**.

Elections for committee members will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a geographic information system locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug. 1, 2024, deadline. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November 2024.

Making Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm *reconstitution* is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current fiscal year, farm combinations and farm divisions must be requested by **August 1 of the fiscal year** for farms subject to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. A reconstitution is considered to be requested when all of the required signatures are on FSA-155 and all other applicable documentation, such as proof of ownership, is submitted.

Total Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and non-ARC/PLC farms may be reconstituted at any time.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon:

- **Estate Method** — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate
- **Designation of Landowner Method** — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method, the

land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding

- **DCP Cropland Method** — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract
- **Default Method** — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

For questions on your farm reconstitution, contact your FSA county office.

Funding Available for Specialty Crop Growers to Help Offset On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for 2024 and 2025

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding the [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops \(FSCSC\) program](#) to now include medium-sized businesses in addition to small businesses. Eligible specialty crop growers can apply for assistance for expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification. The program has also been expanded to include assistance for 2024 and 2025 expenses. Producers can apply for assistance on their calendar year 2024 expenses beginning July 1, 2024, through Jan. 31, 2025. For program year 2025, the application period will be Jan. 1, 2025, through Jan. 31, 2026.

Program Details

FSCSC assists specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification. FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing its certification, as well as a portion of related expenses.

Eligible FSCSC applicants must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small or medium-size business and have paid eligible expenses related to certification.

- A small business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops sold by the applicant during the three-year period preceding the program year of no more than \$500,000.
- A medium size business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops the applicant sold during the three-year period preceding the program year of at least \$500,001 but no more than \$1,000,000.

Specialty crop operations can receive the following cost assistance:

- 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.
- Training

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each eligible cost category. Details about payment rates and limitations are available at farmers.gov/food-safety.

Program Participants Must Maintain Acres Enrolled in ARC/PLC, CRP; Includes Control of Noxious Weeds

Producers enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants also must control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Nebraska is May 1 through July 15. Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

For reference, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has designated 12 weeds in the state as noxious: Canada thistle, leafy spurge, musk thistle, plumeless thistle, purple loosestrife, spotted and diffuse knapweeds, saltcedar, phragmites, sericea lespedeza, Japanese knotweed, Bohemian knotweed and giant knotweed. Producers can learn more about these weeds, and how to control them, by clicking on the pictures [found at this link](#). In addition, producers are encouraged to discuss control options with their local county weed control superintendent, who can be found by typing www.newweed.org into a web browser and clicking on "Control Authorities" or contact representatives within their county Extension office.

County FSA offices will complete field visits and spot-checks of ARC/PLC and CRP acreage and will consult with county weed authorities as necessary. This effort usually begins the later part of May and continues through the summer months.

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 or visit the website at <https://farmhotline.com>.

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 or visit the website at <https://negotiations.nebraska.gov/>.

FSA Loan Interest Rates for July

OPERATING/OWNERSHIP

Farm Operating: 5.5%
Farm Operating – Limited Resource: 5%
Farm Ownership: 5.75%
Farm Ownership – Limited Resource: 5%
Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 3.75%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.75%
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

FARM STORAGE FACILITY LOAN

3-year term: 4.625%
5-year term: 4.375%
7-year term: 4.375%
10-year term: 4.375%
12-year term: 4.375%

MARKETING ASSISTANCE

Commodity Loan: 6.125%

Reminders for FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security

Farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans are responsible for maintaining loan collateral. Borrowers must obtain prior consent or approval from FSA or the guaranteed lender for any transaction that affects real estate security. These transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind
- Easements of any kind
- Subordinations
- Partial releases
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#).

Manage Your FSA Business Records

It's important for Farm Service Agency customers to report changes in their operation to their county FSA office so their business records can be kept current. Changes in the farm/ranch operation, like the addition of a farm/ranch by lease or purchase, changes in shares or lease terms, new tenants, changes in land ownership, or creation of an entity, should be reported to the county FSA office. This also includes changes to customer address, zip code, phone number, email address or an incorrect name or business name on file.

FSA program payments are issued electronically into customer bank accounts, and in order to make timely payments, customers should notify FSA of changes to banking information (such as if a financial institution merges or is purchased or if an account is closed or changed). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

Producers participating in FSA and NRCS programs also are required to timely report, as an update to their CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan, changes to their contributions of land, capital, equipment, labor or management to the operation.

If you have any changes or corrections, please call your local FSA office to update your records as soon as possible.

Survey Aims to Help USDA Understand Landowner Conservation Choices

If you are a grazing or forest landowner or manager, you may be asked this summer to participate in a survey designed to help the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) improve the financial and technical services it offers grazing and forest landowners.

A joint project between NRCS and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the [Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey \(CPAMS\)](#) is aimed at understanding why people choose to use or not use different conservation practices.

NASS began surveying more than 40,000 grazing and forest operations in June 2024. Respondents are encouraged to participate online but may also respond through the mail or by sending a fax.

You can learn more about CPAMS by watching [this short video](#).





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Visit the Nebraska NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/ne.

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