

## In This Issue:

- [Message from the State Executive Director](#)
- [USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service](#)
- [USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service](#)
- [USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online](#)
- [USDA Offers Farmers.gov Features to Help Farmers Hire Workers](#)
- [USDA Announces Signup for Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program](#)
- [Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance](#)
- [The Importance of Responding to NASS Surveys](#)
- [Report Banking Changes to FSA](#)
- [Five Facts About the United States Drought Monitor](#)

---

## Message from the State Executive Director

Greetings Neighbor,

As we wrap up the final days of March, we end by celebrating National Ag Day March 21, and kick off National Ag Week, March 21-27. As I reflect on the unique and diverse set of products that are grown across our great State of New Mexico, I would like to thank all the New Mexico farmers and ranchers for their irreplaceable value to our state's economy through producing the foods and fibers that we require daily, as well as their contribution to our Nation's food supply. It is because of their hard work that we have access to nutritious food year around.

As a reminder Signup 60 for General Conservation Reserve Program began on February 27 and will run through April 7. CRP is a land conservation program. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality,

prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. For more information, please visit our webpage, [About the Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#).

Some CRP participants have reported receiving ROBO calls regarding CRP program. Please be advised these calls are from a third party and not associated with the Farm Service Agency. Based on our understanding, the group making the calls are giving the general signup dates and telling producers to visit their local office.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued nearly \$290.5 million in top-up payments through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP) to nearly 172,000 underserved producers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to issue payments to underserved producers who participated in CFAP 2 and are certified as underserved producers.

Producers without form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, on file can submit by **March 31**, to receive the top-up payment. This is an extension from the February 10, deadline. Contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) for more information.

FSA Direct and Guaranteed Loan Borrowers shall contact your local FSA Farm Loan Office or your Guaranteed Loan Lender BEFORE entering ANY lease on real estate that is pledged as security for a loan. The proposed lease agreement(s) will need to be reviewed by FSA to ensure that your loan(s) will remain compliant with program regulations if the lease goes into effect.

Lastly, thank you again for all that you do for New Mexico Agriculture.

Jonas Moya  
State Executive Director

### **OFFICE CLOSURE**

- Memorial Day – May 29
- Juneteenth National Independence Day – June 19
- Independence Day – July 4
- Labor Day – September 4
- Columbus Day– October 9
- Veterans Day (observed) – November 10
- Thanksgiving – November 23
- Christmas Day – December 25

**IMPORTANT DATES** (Please check with your local office for other deadlines that may apply to your particular situation) [Service Center Locator](#)

- **Conservation Programs**
  - Conservation Reserve Program Signup 60 (General)  
Signup Ends **April 7**

- Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous)  
Signup 59 Ongoing
  - **Noninsured Crop Assistance Program (NAP)**
    - Application Closing Date for the following – April 15  
  
Basil, Beets, Broccoli, Cantaloupe, Cauliflower, Cilantro, Eggplant, Gourds, Honeydew, Okra, Pumpkins, Strawberries, Turnips, Watermelon
  - **Acreage Reporting – May 15**
    - Spring Barley, Onions, Pecans (trees), Spring Wheat, Potatoes (Curry, Lea, and Roosevelt Counties)
  - **Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP)**
    - Sign Up Ends June 2
  - **Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase 2**
    - Sign Up Ends June 2
- 

## **USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form will be available starting March 1, 2023.

Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting [farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool](https://farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool) and clicking the 'Get Started' button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The simplified direct loan application and Loan Assistance Tool are the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov) or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

---

## USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting [farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool](https://farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool) and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

## **Background**

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA is taking action to immediately [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) whose operations are at financial risk while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

---

## **USDA Offers Options for Signing and Sharing Documents Online**

Farmers and ranchers working with USDA's Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service can now sign and share documents online in just a few clicks. By using Box or OneSpan, producers can digitally complete business transactions without leaving their homes or agricultural operations. Both services are free, secure, and available for multiple FSA and NRCS programs.

Box is a secure, cloud-based site where FSA or NRCS documents can be managed and shared. Producers who choose to use Box can create a username and password to access their secure Box account, where documents can be downloaded, printed, manually signed, scanned, uploaded, and shared digitally with Service Center staff. This service is available to any FSA or NRCS customer with access to a mobile device or computer with printer connectivity.

OneSpan is a secure eSignature solution for FSA and NRCS customers. Like Box, no software downloads or eAuthentication is required for OneSpan. Instead, producers interested in eSignature through OneSpan can confirm their identity through two-factor authentication using a verification code sent to their mobile device or a personalized question and answer. Once identity is confirmed, documents can be reviewed and e-signed through OneSpan via the producer's personal email address. Signed documents immediately become available to the appropriate Service Center staff.

Box and OneSpan are both optional services for customers interested in improved efficiency in signing and sharing documents with USDA, and they do not replace existing systems using eAuthentication for digital signature. Instead, these tools provide additional digital options for producers to use when conducting business with FSA or NRCS.

USDA Service Center staff are available to help producers get started with Box and OneSpan through a few simple steps. Please visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator) to find your local office and let Service Center staff know you're interested in signing and sharing documents through these new features. In most cases, one quick phone call will be all that is needed to initiate the process.

Visit [farmers.gov/mydocs](https://farmers.gov/mydocs) to learn more about Box and OneSpan, steps for getting started, and additional resources for conducting business with USDA online.

---

## USDA Offers Farmers.gov Features to Help Farmers Hire Workers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers features on the [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) website designed to help facilitate the employment of H-2A workers.

USDA's goal is to help farmers navigate the complex H-2A program that is administered by Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department so hiring a farm worker is an easier process.

The primary new H-2A features on Farmers.gov include:

- A real-time dashboard that enables farmers to track the status of their eligible employer application and visa applications for temporary nonimmigrant workers;
- Streamlining the login information so if a farmer has an existing login.gov account they can save multiple applications tracking numbers for quick look-up at any time;
- Enables easy access to the Department of Labor's (DOL) Foreign Labor Application Gateway (FLAG);
- Allows farmers to track time-sensitive actions taken in the course of Office of Foreign Labor Certification's (OFLC) adjudication of temporary labor certification applications;
- Allowing for farmers to access all application forms on-line.

All information can be found at [www.farmers.gov/manage/h2a](https://www.farmers.gov/manage/h2a).

In 2018, USDA unveiled farmers.gov, a dynamic, mobile-friendly public website combined with an authenticated portal where customers can apply for programs, process transactions and manage accounts. With feedback from customers and field employees who serve those customers, [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) delivers farmer-focused features through an agile, iterative process to deliver the greatest immediate value to America's agricultural producers – helping farmers and ranchers do right, and feed everyone.

---

# USDA Announces Signup for Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program

The Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) will assist eligible producers of agricultural commodities who experienced revenue decreases in calendar year 2020 compared to 2018 or 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. PARP will help address gaps in previous pandemic assistance, which was targeted at price loss or lack of market access, rather than overall revenue losses.

USDA's Farm Service Agency will accept PARP applications from January 23, 2023, through June 2, 2023.

## Eligible and Ineligible Commodities

For PARP, eligible agricultural commodities include crops, aquaculture, livestock, livestock byproducts, or other animals or animal byproducts that are produced as part of a farming operation and are intended to be commercially marketed. This includes only commodities produced in the United States or those produced outside the United States by a producer located in the United States and marketed inside the United States.

The following commodities **are not eligible** for PARP:

- Wild free-roaming animals.
- Horses and other animals used or intended to be used for racing or wagering.
- Aquatic species that do not meet the definition of aquaculture.
- *Cannabis sativa L.* and any part of that plant that does not meet the definition of hemp.
- Timber.

## Program Eligibility

PARP payments will be made on a whole-farm basis, not commodity-by-commodity. To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and must have experienced a 15 percent decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020, as compared to either:

- The 2018 or 2019 **calendar year**, *as elected by the producer*, if they received allowable gross revenue during the 2018 or 2019 **calendar years**, or
- The producer's expected 2020 calendar year allowable gross revenue, if the producer had no allowable gross revenue in 2018 or 2019.

PARP payments will be issued after the application period ends on June 2, 2023.

For more information on determining allowable gross revenue visit [farmers.gov/coronavirus/pandemic-assistance/parp](https://farmers.gov/coronavirus/pandemic-assistance/parp) or review the [PARP fact sheet](#).

## More Information

To apply for PARP, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

---

## Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance

The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the conversion of land from native vegetation to commodity crop production after December 23, 1985. As part of the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, if you’re proposing to produce agricultural commodities (crops that require annual tillage including one pass planting operations and sugar cane) on land that has been determined highly erodible and that has no crop history prior to December 23, 1985, that land must be farmed in accordance with a conservation plan or system that ensures no substantial increase in soil erosion.

Eligibility for many USDA programs requires compliance with a conservation plan or system on highly erodible land (HEL) used for the production of agricultural commodities. This includes Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan, disaster assistance, safety net, price support, and conservation programs; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs; and Risk Management Agency (RMA) Federal crop insurance.

Before you clear or prepare areas not presently under production for crops that require annual tillage, you are required to file Form AD-1026 “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification,” with FSA indicating the area to be brought into production. The notification will be referred to NRCS to determine if the field is considered highly erodible land. If the field is considered HEL, you are required to implement a conservation plan or system that limits the erosion to the tolerable soil loss (T) for the predominant HEL soil on those fields.

In addition, prior to removing trees or conducting any other land manipulations that may affect wetlands, remember to update form AD-1026, to ensure you remain in compliance with the wetland conservation provisions.

Prior to purchasing or renting new cropland acres, it is recommended that you check with your local USDA Service Center to ensure your activities will be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

For additional information on highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation compliance, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#).

---

## The Importance of Responding to NASS Surveys

USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture.



If you receive a survey questionnaire, please respond quickly and online if possible.

The results of the surveys help determine the structure of USDA farm programs, such as soil rental rates for the Conservation Reserve Program and prices and yields used for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. This county-level data is critical for USDA farm payment determinations. Survey responses also help associations, businesses and policymakers advocate for their industry and help educate others on the importance of agriculture.

NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

NASS data is available online at [nass.usda.gov/Publications](https://nass.usda.gov/Publications) and through the searchable [Quick Stats database](#). Watch a video on how NASS data is used at [youtube.com/watch?v=m-4zjnh26io&feature=youtu.be](https://youtube.com/watch?v=m-4zjnh26io&feature=youtu.be).

---

## Report Banking Changes to FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to receive timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for any reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

For some programs, payments are not made until the following year. For example, payments for crop year 2019 through the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage program aren't paid until 2020. If the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

---

## Five Facts About the United States Drought Monitor

This is likely no surprise to you, but drought persists across the western U.S. and is intensifying in some areas. No geographic area is immune to the potential of drought at any given time. The [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) provides a weekly drought assessment, and it plays an important role in USDA programs that help farmers and ranchers recover from drought.

### **Fact #1 - Numerous agencies use the Drought Monitor to inform drought-related decisions.**

The map identifies areas of drought and labels them by intensity on a weekly basis. It categorizes the entire country as being in one of six levels of drought. The first two, None and

Abnormally Dry (D0), are not considered to be drought. The next four describe increasing levels of drought: Moderate (D1), Severe (D2), Extreme (D3) and Exceptional (D4).

While many entities consult the Drought Monitor for drought information, drought declarations are made by federal, [state](#) and local agencies that may or may not use the Drought Monitor to inform their decisions. Some of the ways USDA uses it to determine a producer's eligibility for certain [drought assistance programs](#), like the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) and [Emergency Haying or Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acres](#) and to "fast-track" [Secretarial drought disaster designations](#).

## **Fact #2 - U.S. Drought Monitor is made with more than precipitation data.**

When you think about drought, you probably think about water, or the lack of it. Precipitation plays a major role in the creation of the Drought Monitor, but the map's author considers [numerous indicators](#), including [drought impacts](#) and local insight from over 450 expert observers around the country. Authors use several dozen indicators to assess drought, including precipitation, streamflow, reservoir levels, temperature and evaporative demand, soil moisture and vegetation health. Because the drought monitor depicts both short and long-term drought conditions, the authors must look at data for multiple timeframes. The final map produced each week represents a summary of the story being told by all the pieces of data. To help tell that story, authors don't just look at data. They converse over the course of the map-making week with experts across the country and draw information about drought impacts from media reports and private citizens.

## **Fact #3 - A real person, using real data, updates the map.**

Each week's map author, not a computer, processes and analyzes data to update the drought monitor. The [map authors](#) are trained climatologists or meteorologists from the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (the academic partner and website host of the Drought Monitor), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and USDA. The author's job is to do what a computer can't – use their expertise to reconcile the sometimes-conflicting stories told by each stream of data into a single assessment.

## **Fact #4 - The Drought Monitor provides a current snapshot, not a forecast.**

The Drought Monitor is a "snapshot" of conditions observed during the most recent week and builds off the previous week's map. The map is released on Thursdays and depicts conditions based on data for the week that ended the preceding Tuesday. Rain that falls on the Wednesday just before the USDM's release won't be reflected until the next map is published. This provides a consistent, week-to-week product and gives the author a window to assess the data and come up with a final map.

## **Fact #5 – Your input can be part of the drought-monitoring process.**

State climatologists and other trained observers in the drought monitoring network relay on-the-ground information from numerous sources to the US Drought monitor author each week. That can include information that you contribute.

The Drought Monitor serves as a trigger for multiple forms of federal disaster relief for agricultural producers, and sometimes producers contact the author to suggest that drought conditions in their area are worse than what the latest drought monitor shows. When the author gets a call like that, it prompts them to look closely at all available data for that area, to

see whether measurements of precipitation, temperature, soil moisture and other indicators corroborate producer-submitted reports. This is the process that authors follow whether they receive one report or one hundred reports, although reports from more points may help state officials and others know where to look for impacts.

There are multiple ways to contribute your observations:

1. **Talk to your state climatologist** - Find the current list at the [American Association of State Climatologists](#) website.
2. **Email** - Emails sent to [droughtmonitor@unl.edu](mailto:droughtmonitor@unl.edu) inform the USDM authors.
3. **Become a CoCoRaHS observer** - Submit drought reports along with daily precipitation observations to the [Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network](#).
4. **Submit Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR)** - [go.unl.edu/CMOR](http://go.unl.edu/CMOR).

For more information, read our [Ask the Expert blog with a NDMC climatologist](#) or visit [farmers.gov/protection-recovery](http://farmers.gov/protection-recovery).

## New Mexico Farm Service Agency

100 Sun Ave. NE Suite 200  
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Phone: 505-761-4900  
Fax: 877-450-0860

### State Executive Director:

**Jonas Moya**

[jonas.moya@usda.gov](mailto:jonas.moya@usda.gov)

### Executive Officer:

**Brenda Archuleta**

[brenda.archuleta@usda.gov](mailto:brenda.archuleta@usda.gov)

### Farm Loan Chief:

**LeAnn Gibbs**

[lisa.gibbs@usda.gov](mailto:lisa.gibbs@usda.gov)

### Farm Program Chief:

**Joilynn Gray**

[joilynn.gray@usda.gov](mailto:joilynn.gray@usda.gov)

### District Directors:

**Andrew Flores**

[andrew.flores@usda.gov](mailto:andrew.flores@usda.gov)

**Oscar Rivera**

[oscar.rivera@usda.gov](mailto:oscar.rivera@usda.gov)

**Rhonda Mitchell**

[rhonda.mitchell@usda.gov](mailto:rhonda.mitchell@usda.gov)

To find contact information for your local office go to [www.fsa.usda.gov/NM](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/NM)