



## New Mexico FSA State Newsletter - June 2024

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### **Message from the State Executive Director**

Hello Friends,

Summer is here and we here at FSA are happy to bring you our monthly updates. Please take a moment to see our new information. I hope everyone stays cool in this hot month of June!

The Conservation Reserve Program has been offered for many years. Just a reminder, there are many types of CRP programs between general and continuous signups. Please be mindful that while land is under a CRP contract, all parties on the contract must comply with the terms and conditions of the contract. General requirements of a contract are to report your CRP acreage by July 15, and ensure your conservation plan is being followed, that includes contacting the office anytime there

is a protentional issue of noncompliance. If there are any questions or concerns regarding the rules or regulations of the program, please contact your local FSA Office.

The ranking results for General CRP Signup 62 offers were released on June 4. Our County Office staff is preparing written to participants to inform them if their offer was accepted. Participants will have five working days to respond to let FSA know if they want to move forward with the contract. At that point, participants will need to work with their local NRCS offices to develop a plan.

The signup period for Grasslands CRP is currently open. The deadline to submit an offer is Friday, June 28. This program is a voluntary working lands conservation program that enables participants to conserve grasslands and provide important conservation benefits for wildlife, soil health and carbon sequestration, all while continuing most grazing and haying practices. For more click [here](#) for program details or click [here](#) for an overview of each ranking factor. To ensure our dedicated staff is prepared for your office visit, please [contact your local County Office](#) to schedule an appointment.

A routine reminder, [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) is your one stop shop. Create an account to stay up to date with programs, manage your records, and so much more.

Thank you,

Jonas Moya  
State Executive Director

#### **OFFICE CLOSURE**

- Juneteenth National Independence Day – June 19
- Independence Day – July 4
- Labor Day – September 2
- Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day – October 14
- Veteran's Day – November 11
- Thanksgiving Day – November 28
- 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](#)**

- **Emergency Relief Program (ERP)**
  - Ongoing: No Deadline
- **Conservation Reserve Program (Grasslands) (GCRP)**
  - June 28: Signup Ends
- **Acreage Certification Reporting**
  - July 15: All other crops, Perennial Forage, Potatoes (All New Mexico Counties, **except** Curry, Lea, and Roosevelt)
  - July 31: Hemp
  - August 15: Beans

For crops covered by NAP, the acreage reporting is the **earlier of** the acreage reporting date of 15 calendar days before harvest or the onsite of grazing.

- **2025 Noninsured Crop Assistance Program (NAP) Application Closing Dates**
  - August 30: Canola
  - September 1: Aquaculture, Floriculture, Garlic, Onions, Sod Grass
  - September 30: Barely, Canola, Oats, Rye, Triticale, Wheat
  - November 20: Apples, Apricots, Cherries, Caneberries, Grapes, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Pistachios, Plums
  - December 1: Grass, Honey, Lettuce
- **Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)**
  - October 31: Signup Ends

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**USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking nominations for four positions on the [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production](#). USDA will accept nominations from May 7, 2024, to July 7, 2024. The 12-member Committee, which first convened in March 2022, is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

Members of the Committee include representative from urban and innovative agricultural production, higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chain, and financing. Last year, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [appointed four new members](#) to the Committee to replace members whose terms expired. The Committee's last [public meeting](#) was held in April 2024.

## **Nominations**

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise. Four positions are open for nominations including:

- One individual who is an agricultural producer or farmer using innovative technology.
- One individual representing an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One individual with supply chain experience, which may include a food aggregator, wholesale food distributor, food hub, or an individual who has direct-to-consumer market experience.
- One individual representing related experience in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership must submit a nomination package including the following:

- A completed [background disclosure form \(Form AD-755\)](#) signed by the nominee.

- A brief summary explaining the nominee’s interest in one or more open vacancies including any unique qualifications that address the membership composition and criteria described above.
- A resume providing the nominee's background, experience, and educational qualifications.
- Recent publications by the nominee relative to extending support for urban agriculture or innovative production (optional).
- Letter(s) of endorsement (optional).

Nomination packages must be submitted by email to [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov) or postmarked by July 7, 2024. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to USDA NRCS, Attn: Brian Guse, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4083, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations. For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

Additional details are available in the [Federal Register notice](#).

Learn more at [www.usda.gov/urban](http://www.usda.gov/urban). For additional resources available to producers, download the [Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure](#) or visit [www.farmers.gov/urban](http://www.farmers.gov/urban).

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## **USDA Now Accepting Applications for Available Funds to Help Cover Organic Certification Costs**

Through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will cover up to 75% of organic certification costs at a maximum of \$750 per certification category. FSA is now accepting applications, and organic producers and handlers should apply for OCCSP by the Oct. 31, 2024, deadline for eligible expenses incurred from Oct. 1, 2023, to Sept. 30, 2024. FSA will issue payments as applications are received and approved.

OCCSP was part of a [broader organic announcement](#) made by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on May 15, 2024, which also included the Organic Market Development Grant program and Organic Transition Initiative.

## **Eligible Applicants, Expenses and Categories**

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of organic agricultural commodities for expenses incurred obtaining or maintaining organic certification under USDA's [National Organic Program](#). Eligible OCCSP applicants include any certified organic producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent.

Cost share assistance covers expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, inspector travel expenses, user fees, sales assessments and postage. OCCSP pays a maximum of \$750 per certification category for crops, wild crops, livestock, processing/handling, and state organic program fees (California only).

## **How to Apply**

To apply, producers and handlers should contact FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) and be prepared to provide documentation of organic certification and eligible expenses. OCCSP applications can also be submitted through participating state departments of agriculture. For more information, visit the [OCCSP](#) webpage.

## **Opportunity for State Departments of Agriculture**

FSA is also accepting applications from state departments of agriculture to administer OCCSP. FSA posted a [funding opportunity summary on grants.gov](#) and will electronically mail the Notice of Funding Opportunity to all eligible state departments of agriculture. Applications are due July 12, 2024.

If a state department of agriculture chooses to participate in OCCSP, both the state department of agriculture and FSA county offices in that state will accept OCCSP applications and make payments to eligible certified operations. Producers or handlers can receive OCCSP assistance from either FSA or the participating state department of agriculture but not both.

## **More Information**

USDA offers other assistance for organic producers, including the [Organic Transition Initiative \(OTI\)](#), which includes direct farmer assistance for organic production and processing and conservation. For more information on organic agriculture, visit [farmers.gov/organic](https://farmers.gov/organic).

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and view other farm records data and customer information by logging into their [farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, sign up today.

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## **USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that most farm loan borrowers will soon be able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](#) in early February. Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, especially for producers who may have limited time during the planting or harvest seasons to visit a local FSA office; modernize and improve customer service; provide additional customer self-service tools; and expand credit access to assist more producers.

On average, local USDA Service Centers process more than 225,000 farm loan payments each year. Pay My Loan gives most borrowers an online repayment option and relieves them from needing to call, mail, or visit a Service Center to pay their loan installment. Farm loan payments can now be made at the borrower's convenience, on their schedule and outside of FSA office hours.

Pay My Loan also provides time savings for FSA's farm loan employees by minimizing manual payment processing activities. This new service for producers means that farm loan employees will have more time to focus on reviewing and processing new loans or servicing requests.

The Pay My Loan feature can be accessed at [farmers.gov/loans](#). To use the payment feature, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account](#) or a [Login.gov account](#). This initial release only allows individuals with loans to make online payments. For now, borrowers with jointly payable checks will need to continue to make loan payments through their local office.

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made various improvements including:

- The [Online Loan Application](#), an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.

A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), which reduced loan applications by more than half, from 29 pages to 13 pages.

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### **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.

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### **Receipt for Service - Improving Customer Service**

Did you know that, as a customer in any USDA service center, employees are required, per federal law and USDA regulations, to provide you with a computer-generated receipt at the end of your visit? This [Receipt for Service](#) details the type of service you requested, the service and response provided by the staff, and the date and time of your visit.

The 2014 Farm Bill designated that FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD) employees are statutorily required to provide



producers a receipt when a current or prospective producer or landowner interacts or engages with the Agency regarding a USDA benefit or service.

On behalf of our customers, FSA employees are required to enter receipts timely and create only one receipt per customer per visit, regardless of the number of employee interactions a customer may encounter in a single visit. A single receipt will be generated that provides a summary of the customer's visit on behalf of the other employees who also met with the customer on the same day. Employees must also ensure that all services rendered are properly reflected in that receipt.

Issuing a receipt is required by our offices. If you do not receive a receipt, please be sure to request one. For more information, FSA's [Receipt for Service handbook](#) is now available online.

Don't leave the office without your receipt!

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### **FSA Offers Safety Net Programs for Honeybee Producers**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers two programs that have specific safety net benefits for producers of honeybees and honey. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) assist producers when disasters impact honey production or damage or destroy colonies, hives or honeybee feed.

NAP is designed to reduce financial losses when natural disasters result in lower yields or crop losses, including honey. NAP coverage is equivalent to catastrophic insurance, meaning it covers up to 50 percent of a producer's normal yield (must have at least a 50 percent loss) at 55 percent of the average market price. The 2018 Farm Bill reinstates higher levels of coverage, from 50 to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organics and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at the coverage levels of between 50 and 65 percent of expected production.

The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

You must apply for NAP coverage by [Dec. 1] prior to the year for which you're seeking coverage.

ELAP covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses (the physical structure) and honeybee feed losses in instances where the colony, hive or feed has been destroyed by a natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality.

Both the NAP and ELAP programs require you to report the number of colonies you have in production to FSA by Jan. 2. You must notify FSA within 30 calendar days of changes in the total number of colonies or when honeybees are moved to another county.

For both programs, you must notify FSA within 15 calendar days of when a loss occurs or from when the loss is apparent. To learn more about programs for honey and honeybee producers, contact your Local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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