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## **A Message from the Ohio FSA State Office**

A friendly reminder that the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) enrollment for crop year 2024 is open. We strongly encourage producers to contact their [County FSA office](#) to setup an appointment today to make or change elections and to enroll

for 2024, providing future protections against market fluctuations. Ohio FSA has over 98,000 farms to assist before March 15, and we are doing our very best to manage our office traffic. **In Ohio, producers have completed just over 66,000 contracts to date, representing 67% of the more than 98,000 expected contracts.** With the deadline quickly approaching, producers are encouraged to schedule appointments to complete the process as soon as possible. There will **not be an extension** of this deadline. Our staff can also work with producers via phone, email and through Box and OneSpan, our electronic options for sharing and signing FSA forms.

Starting Wednesday Feb. 28, dairy producers will be able to enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), an important safety net program offered through the USDA that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences. This year's DMC **signup begins Feb. 28, 2024, and ends April 29, 2024.** For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may begin as soon as March 4, 2024, for any payments that triggered in January 2024. FSA has revised the regulations for DMC to allow eligible dairy operations to make a one-time adjustment to established production history. This adjustment will be accomplished by combining previously established supplemental production history with DMC production history for those dairy operations that participated in Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage during a prior coverage year. DMC has also been authorized through calendar year 2024.

As a reminder, FSA continues to accept applications for the [Emergency Relief Program 2022](#), a program designed to provide financial assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers who experienced a loss of income due to qualifying natural disasters occurring in 2022.

FSA also continues to accept applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). FSA encourages agricultural producers and landowners interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, as there are several enrollment options to consider, including:

- [CLEAR 30](#)
- [Highly Erodible Lands Initiative \(HELI\)](#),
- [Lake Erie CREP](#),
- [Scioto River Watershed CREP](#),
- [Farmable Wetlands Program](#),
- Ohio offers a [Ohio Pollinator and Monarch SAFE](#) project, and the [Upland Bird SAFE](#) project in designated counties throughout Ohio. The initiative restores vital habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife conservation goals.

FSA continues to accept applications for the [Transition Incentive Program \(TIP\)](#) program until **July 31**. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can apply to re-enroll, if their contracts will expire this year. To submit an offer, producers should contact their [County FSA office](#) by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by Oct. 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Our FSA farm loan team continues to stay busy as they work with producers who are in need of farm operating loans for the 2024 production season. If this is something you are considering, it's better to contact us sooner rather than later. FSA offers direct operating and ownership loans as well as guaranteed loans in partnership with your local lender. To assist

customers, USDA launched a [Loan Assistance Tool](#) (LAT) on farmers.gov to provide farm loan applicants with an interactive online, step-by-step guide through the farm loan process. Use the [Loan Assistance Tool](#) to check your eligibility for FSA Loans, discover FSA loan types, learn about FSA Loan requirements, and walk through the easy-to-understand instructions when completing the forms. If interested in an FSA loan, contact your [FSA farm loan team](#) to begin the conversation.

The FSA recently announced that most farm loan borrowers are able to make payments to their direct loans online through the Pay My Loan feature on [farmers.gov](#). Pay My Loan is part of a broader effort by 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.

Additional program details and more in-depth information is provided in our newsletter. Please don't hesitate to contact your [County FSA office](#) for questions about our programs, loans and information that is included in this newsletter edition.

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## Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage Beginning Feb. 28

### *Payments to Begin Early March*

Starting Wednesday Feb. 28, 2024, dairy producers will be able to enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), an important safety net program offered through the USDA that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences. **This year's DMC sign-up begins Feb. 28, 2024, and ends April 29, 2024.** For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may begin as soon as March 4, 2024, for any payments that triggered in January 2024.

FSA has revised the regulations for DMC to allow eligible dairy operations to make a one-time adjustment to established production history. This adjustment will be accomplished by combining previously established supplemental production history with DMC production history for those dairy operations that participated in Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage during a prior coverage year. DMC has also been authorized through calendar year 2024. Congress passed a 2018 Farm Bill extension requiring these regulatory changes to the program.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. In 2023, Dairy Margin Coverage payments triggered in 11 months including two months, June and July, where the margin fell below the catastrophic level of \$4.00 per hundredweight, a first for Dairy Margin Coverage or its predecessor Margin Protection Program.

### **2024 DMC Coverage and Premium Fees**

FSA has revised DMC regulations to extend coverage for calendar year 2024, which is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2024, and to provide an adjustment to the production history for dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of production. In previous years, smaller dairy operations could establish a supplemental production history and receive Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage. For 2024, dairy producers can establish one adjusted base production

history through DMC for each participating dairy operation to better reflect the operation's current production.

For 2024 DMC enrollment, dairy operations that established supplemental production history through Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage for coverage years 2021 through 2023, will combine the supplemental production history with established production history for one adjusted base production history.

For dairy operations enrolled in 2023 DMC under a multi-year lock-in contract, lock-in eligibility will be extended until Dec. 31, 2024. In addition, dairy operations enrolled in multi-year lock-in contracts are eligible for the discounted DMC premium rate during the 2024 coverage year. To confirm 2024 DMC lock-in coverage or opt out in favor of an annual contract for 2024, dairy operations having lock-in contracts must enroll during the 2024 DMC enrollment period.

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, minus a \$100 administrative fee. The administrative fee is waived for dairy producers who are considered limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or a military veteran. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

### **DMC Payments**

DMC payments are calculated using updated feed and premium hay costs, making the program more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses. These updated feed calculations use 100% premium alfalfa hay.

### **More Information**

USDA also offers other risk management tools for dairy producers, including the [Dairy Revenue Protection \(DRP\)](#) plan that protects against a decline in milk revenue (yield and price) and the [Livestock Gross Margin \(LGM\)](#) plan, which provides protection against the loss of the market value of milk minus the feed costs. Both DRP and LGM livestock insurance policies are offered through the Risk Management Agency. Producers should contact their local [crop insurance agent](#) for more information.

For more information on DMC, visit the [DMC webpage](#) or contact your [County FSA office](#).

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## **USDA Accepts Applications for the 1890 National Scholars Program through March 1**

The application window for the 2024 [USDA 1890 National Scholars Program](#) is open **through March 1, 2024**.

This program provides educational and career opportunities for U.S. citizens seeking bachelor's degrees from an 1890 Land Grant University. The scholarship provides full tuition, fees, books, room and board to students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher pursuing degrees in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or related academic disciplines. Scholars are also eligible for summer internships that may convert to full-time employment with USDA after graduation.

### **Additional requirements for High School applicants:**

- Have applied for or have been accepted at an 1890 Land-Grant University
- Have a high school diploma with an unweighted GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate
- Minimum test scores: ACT 21 composite or SAT 1080 combined verbal/math
- Study food, agriculture, natural resource sciences, or other related disciplines
- Demonstrate leadership and community service

**Additional requirements for college applicants:**

- Be a college freshman or sophomore
- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale
- Attend an 1890 Land-Grant University
- Study food, agriculture, natural resource sciences, or other related discipline
- Demonstrate leadership and community service

Please visit [USDA 1890 National Scholars Program](#) for more information or contact the USDA Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement at (202) 720-6350 or [1890init@usda.gov](mailto:1890init@usda.gov) with questions.

## USDA Floodplain Easement Funding Available To Ohio Landowners

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Ohio Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications from landowners interested in Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE) to protect lives and property from flooding or soil erosion. Applications for EWPP-FPE are taken on a continuous basis. The deadline to receive fiscal year 2024 funding **is March 15, 2024**.

A floodplain easement is a reserved interest in the land defined in a deed where the landowner conveys specific property rights to NRCS but retains ownership, title, and interest in the property. Owners will continue to enjoy limited property rights including:

- The right to quiet enjoyment
- The right to control public access
- The right to undeveloped recreational use such as fishing or hunting.

Floodplain easements offer vital recovery options for local communities to help reduce hazards to life and property caused by major storms by restoring and protecting a floodplain's natural hydrology and native vegetation. Increased floodplain storage also offers water quality benefits such as reduced sediment and nutrient loading.

Find Ohio's ranking dates as well as other program information on the [Ohio NRCS Floodplain Easement](#) webpage or contact Christopher Eidson at [Christopher.Eidson@usda.gov](mailto:Christopher.Eidson@usda.gov). To learn more about other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS conservation programs, visit [Get Started with NRCS](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

# Agricultural Producers Have Until March 15 to Enroll in USDA's Key Commodity Safety Net Programs for the 2024 Crop Year

*Call Today To Make Your Appointment*

Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2024 crop year have until March 15, 2024, to revise elections and sign contracts. Both safety net programs, delivered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provide vital income support to farmers who experience substantial declines in crop prices or revenues for the 2024 crop year. **In Ohio, producers have completed just over 66,000 contracts to date, representing 67% of the more than 98,000 expected contracts.**

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual, which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll, with a signed contract, each year. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm, the contract will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision **by the March 15, 2024**, deadline, the election remains the same as their 2023 election for eligible commodities on the farm. Also, producers who do not complete enrollment and sign their contract by the deadline will not be enrolled in ARC or PLC for the 2024 year and will not receive a payment if one is triggered. Farm owners can only enroll in these programs if they have a share interest in the commodity.

Producers are eligible to enroll farms with base acres for the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

## **Web-Based Decision Tools**

Many universities offer web-based decision tools to help producers make informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Producers are encouraged to use the tool of their choice to support their ARC and PLC elections.

## **Crop Insurance Considerations**

Producers are reminded that enrolling in ARC or PLC programs can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products offered by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA). Producers who elect and enroll in PLC also have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider, but producers of covered commodities who elect ARC are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres.

Unlike SCO, RMA's Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by participating in ARC for the same crop, on the same acres. You may elect ECO regardless of your farm program election.

## **More Information**

For more information on ARC and PLC or to signup, producers should contact their [USDA FSA County Office](#).

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## FSA Reminds Producers of Approaching NAP Deadlines for 2024 Crops

FSA reminds producers who are interested in the 2024 Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), of the need to apply for coverage by the following crop deadline dates.

- **March 15, 2024** is the deadline for 2024 NAP coverage on forage sorghum, oats, potatoes, Soybeans, Sunflowers and all spring planted specialty crops grown for food.

### NAP Buy-Up Coverage Option

NAP offers 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. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

### NAP Service Fees

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

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria. Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, “*Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification*.”

To help producers learn more about the NAP program and how it can help them, USDA, offers an online Web tool at [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap). The webtool allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for coverage and gives producers an opportunity to explore a variety of options and levels to determine the best protection level for their operation.

For more information on NAP coverage or obtain coverage, please contact your [FSA County office](#).

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## USDA Rural Development Agency Seeks Applicants for the Rural Energy for America Program

USDA Rural Development has available the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to help farmers and rural, small, for-profit businesses install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.

Funding for the REAP grants has increased sharply due to the funding available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed by Congress in 2022.

- Renewable energy projects may be eligible for up to **\$1,000,000** or 50% of eligible project costs, whichever is less.
- Energy Efficiency Improvement projects may be eligible for up to **\$500,000** or 50% of eligible project cost, whichever is less.

Submission of a REAP application is strongly encouraged due to the increased availability of funds and per project funding.

Renewable energy projects can include: Solar PV, Solar Thermal, Wind, Geothermal, Biomass and Anaerobic Digester projects.

Energy Efficiency Improvement projects can include: HVAC upgrades, lighting replacements, grain dryer replacements, fans and motors, along with other improvements as outlined in the energy audit.

Applications for this program are received on a quarterly basis with the next deadline being **March 31, 2024**.

Please contact one of the following Rural Development personnel with questions:

- Danielle Frye; 330-481-2230 [frye@usda.gov](mailto:frye@usda.gov)
- Justin Dueitt; 614-255-2427 [dueitt@usda.gov](mailto:dueitt@usda.gov)
- Jennifer Brown; 614-255-2391 [brown@usda.gov](mailto:brown@usda.gov)
- Marcy Lucas; 740-885-3319 [lucas@usda.gov](mailto:lucas@usda.gov)
- Evan Kohler; 614-255-2411 [kohler@usda.gov](mailto:kohler@usda.gov)
- Randy Monhemius; 614-255-2424 [monhemius@usda.gov](mailto:monhemius@usda.gov)

Additional information and application materials can be found at the following website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency-improvement-guaranteed-loans/oh>

**NOTE:** The program cannot be used for residential improvements.

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## Deadlines Approaching for Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Program Coverage

Don't wait! USDA's Risk Management Agency may have the coverage you need if you are running a smaller operation. The Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm are great risk management options for urban, organic and/or innovative producers.

[RMA Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#) provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on the farm under one insurance. This covers farms with specialty or organic commodities and or those marketing to local, regional, specialty, and direct markets, and



allows diversified farms to insure all their crops under one policy. Check out Frequently Asked Questions on [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection](#). **Sales closing dates vary by region, for Ohio the upcoming sales closing date is March 15, 2024!** To purchase before your sales closing date, speak to a [crop insurance agent](#) as soon as possible

[RMA's Micro Farm Program](#) gives smaller operations (up to \$350,000 in approved revenue) a more cost-effective way to insure all or most of their commodities under one policy. This is ideal for producers who participate in farmers markets and local food networks because post-production operations, such as canning, freezing, and processing can be used to calculate your farm's insurance guarantee. Check out Frequently Asked Questions on [Micro Farm](#). **Sales closing dates vary by region, for Ohio the sales closing date is April 15, 2024!** To purchase before your sales closing date, speak to a [crop insurance agent](#) as soon as possible.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](#) or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

Learn more about [crop insurance for urban farmers and innovative producers](#).

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## USDA Rural Development Offers Value-Added Producer Grant Program

USDA Rural Development has available the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) to help farmers enter value-added activities to generate new products and expand marketing opportunities increasing producer income.

Grant and matching funds can be used for planning activities or for working capital expenses related to processing, marketing and sales of a value-added agricultural product. The maximum planning grant is 50% of the eligible project costs or \$75,000. The maximum working capital grant is \$250,000 or 50% of eligible project costs.

Examples of planning activities include conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans for processing and marketing the proposed value-added product.

Examples of working capital expenses include:

- Processing costs.
- Marketing and advertising expenses.
- Some inventory and salary expenses.

Development of a VAPG application is strongly encouraged to help increase income for agricultural producers. Recent projects funded through this program include freezer beef, pork, and chicken; winery looking to expand wine sales with their new product line; and an orchard which is marketing fresh fruit ice cream.

Paper applications are due to the Rural Development State Office **by April 16, 2024**.

Please contact one of the following Rural Development personnel with questions:

- Danielle Frye; 330-481-2230 [frye@usda.gov](mailto:frye@usda.gov)
- Justin Dueitt; 614-255-2427 [dueitt@usda.gov](mailto:dueitt@usda.gov)
- Jennifer Brown; 614-255-2391 [brown@usda.gov](mailto:brown@usda.gov)
- Marcy Lucas; 740-885-3319 [lucas@usda.gov](mailto:lucas@usda.gov)
- Evan Kohler; 614-255-2411 [kohler@usda.gov](mailto:kohler@usda.gov)
- Randy Monhemius; 614-255-2424 [monhemius@usda.gov](mailto:monhemius@usda.gov)

Additional information and application materials can be found at the following website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/value-added-producer-grants/oh>

**NOTE:** The program cannot be used for the purchase of fixed assets.

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## USDA Now Accepting Farm Loan Payments Online

*Pay My Loan feature can be accessed on [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov)*

The USDA recently announced 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](http://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](http://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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## Producers Encouraged to Apply for USDA's Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

The FSA continues to accept applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). USDA's FSA encourages agricultural producers and landowners who are interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can now apply to re-enroll if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact their [County FSA office](#) by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by Oct. 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Additionally, producers with acres enrolled in Continuous CRP set to expire Sept. 30, 2024, can now offer acres for re-enrollment. A producer can both enroll new acres into Continuous CRP and re-enroll any acres expiring Sept.30, 2024.

FSA water quality practices, such as riparian buffers, prairie strips, grassed waterways, and wetlands, will receive an additional 20% incentive. Buffer practices have a positive impact on water quality. Additionally, the Climate-Smart Practice Incentive launched in 2021 is also available in the Continuous signup.

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## USDA Encourages Producers Participating in Conservation Reserve Program to Consider Forest Management Incentive

*Enroll or re-enroll today*

The USDA is offering financial assistance to agricultural producers and private landowners enrolled in its Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to improve the health of their forests. The Forest Management Incentive, available through USDA's FSA, can help participants with forest management practices, such as brush management and prescribed burning.

The Forest Management Incentive is available to participants with active CRP contracts with forest cover that are not within two years of expiring. The incentive is a payment to eligible CRP participants who properly completed authorized forest management practice activities to improve the condition of resources, promote forest management and enhance wildlife habitat.

Forest management practices include brush management, herbaceous weed control, prescribed burning, firebreaks, development of early successional habitat and forest stand

improvement. Additional information is available in our Forest Management Incentive [fact sheet](#).

Participants can now submit offers for the Forest Management Incentive. Interested producers should contact their [County FSA office](#).

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## **USDA Issued \$306 Million in Final Payments to Producers Impacted by 2020 and 2021 Natural Disasters**

*Final ERP Phase One payment will be Issued*

The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued the final [Emergency Relief Program](#) (ERP) payments totaling approximately \$306 million to eligible commodity and specialty crop producers who incurred losses due to natural disasters in 2020 and 2021.

Recipients of the additional payment are limited to those producers who received ERP Phase One payments from FSA that were calculated based on crop insurance indemnities. Initially, ERP Phase One payments to producers who were indemnified through Federal crop insurance, were subject to a 75% payment factor. FSA has since determined that adequate funding exists to provide an additional 3.5% ERP Phase One payment to producers who had crop insurance increasing the overall payment factor to 78.5%. These additional ERP Phase One payments are subject to FSA payment limitation provisions as outlined in the [ERP Phase One fact sheet](#).

Because ERP Phase One payments to producers of noninsured crops covered by FSA NAP policies were originally paid at 100%, there will be no additional payments issued to these producers for 2020 and 2021 losses.

The *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, 2021* (P.L. 117-43) provided \$10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021. In 2022, FSA implemented ERP Phase One, which delivered \$7.5 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers. For Phase One, ERP used a streamlined process with pre-filled application forms, leveraging crop insurance indemnities or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments on file with USDA.

Separately, through the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) Congress allocated approximately \$3.2 billion in funding to cover necessary expenses related to losses of revenue, quality or production losses of crops. Enrollment is ongoing for ERP 2022, which 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.

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## Reminder: Insurance Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Through the Emergency Relief Program

Producers who received an Emergency Relief Program (ERP) payment need to meet ERP insurance linkage requirements by purchasing crop insurance, or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage where crop insurance is not available.

Purchase coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops for the next two available crop years, which will be determined from the date you received an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of coverage. The insurance coverage requirement applies to the physical location of the county where the crop was located and for which an ERP payment was issued.

Contact your crop insurance agent or local FSA county office as soon as possible to ask about coverage options. Producers who do not obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will be required to refund the ERP benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest. To determine which crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP, visit the RMA website.

For more information, contact your [County FSA office](#).

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## USDA Invests Approximately \$11.5 Million in Composting and Food Waste Reduction Projects in 23 States, Including Ohio

USDA is investing approximately \$11.5 million in 38 cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable waste management plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. This includes 3 projects in Ohio. The Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, which are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture. The CFWR program is jointly administered by USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). [Learn more about the projects](#).

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## February 2024 Loan and Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans, Direct	-- 5.125%
Farm Ownership Loans, Direct	-- 5.375%
Limited Resource Loans	-- 5.000%
Farm Ownership Loans, Down Payment	-- 1.500%
Farm Ownership – Joint Financing	-- 3.375%
Emergency Loans	-- 3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 3 year	-- 4.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 5 year	-- 3.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7 year	-- 4.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10 year	-- 4.000%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12 year	-- 4.000%

Sugar Storage Facility Loans, 15 year -- 4.250%  
Commodity Loans -- 5.750%

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## Dates to Remember

**February 29 --- Deadline** to file a notice of loss and application for payment for LIP. The 30-calendar-day timeframe to submit a notice of loss from the date the loss is apparent for the 2023 and subsequent program years has been waived. The new deadline for filing a notice of loss under LIP will be the same as the final date to submit an application for payment, which is 60 calendar days after the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

**March 1 ---** Primary Nesting Season begins.

**March 15 -** Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) election and enrollment application **deadline** for 2024 crop season.

**March 15 - Deadline** to obtain 2024 NAP coverage on spring planted crops.

**March 15 - Deadline** to purchase NAP coverage for hemp. NAP will be available for 2024 to provide insurance-type coverage due to adverse weather conditions. NAP provides coverage against loss for hemp grown for fiber, grain, seed, or cannabidiol (CBD) for the 2024 crop year where no permanent federal crop insurance program is available.

**March 31 - Final Availability** for 2023 crop wheat, barley, oats, honey loans and LDPs.

### Ongoing Reminders:

**ERP 2022** signup continues. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date.

Reports of Failed Acreage must be filed with the FSA County Office before disposition of the crop.

Reports of Prevented Planting Acreage must be filed with the FSA County Office no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date for that county and producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

Contact FSA right away for notice of loss deadlines and disaster program requirements.

FSA is continually receiving new applications for loan programs.

Inform the office of bank account changes.

Inform FSA if you have picked up or dropped any farm(s).

Inform FSA of farm and cropland boundary changes.

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