

In This Edition of the Ohio FSA State Newsletter:

- [A Message from the Ohio FSA State Office](#)
- [Agricultural Producers Have Until March 15 to Enroll in USDA's Key Commodity Safety Net Programs for the 2024 Crop Year](#)
- [FSA Reminds Producers of Approaching NAP Deadlines for 2024 Crops](#)
- [USDA Rural Development Agency Seeks Applicants for the Rural Energy for America Program](#)
- [Deadlines Approaching for Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Program Coverage](#)
- [USDA Rural Development Offers Value-Added Producer Grant Program](#)
- [Dairy Margin Coverage \(DMC\) Signup Continues](#)
- [March 2024 Loan and Interest Rates](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)

A Message from the Ohio FSA State Office

With the arrival of March, comes a great deal of activity that is occurring in our county offices, so please take a moment to consider whether you have business that needs to be addressed with your [County FSA office](#).

The window is closing soon for producers to work with their FSA office on selection of and enrollment in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) commodity crop safety net programs for 2024. These programs may or may not trigger for a 2024 crop payment, but if you haven't completed your enrollment (the signing of a new contract for 2024) **by March 15**, you won't be eligible if payments do trigger. We need all signatures on contracts by the deadline. Please contact your FSA office immediately to complete the process.

Producers that are interested in growing hemp this upcoming 2024 growing season are reminded that NAP coverage for hemp is available with the 2024 crop year for licensed producers of commercial hemp meeting specific requirements, in addition to the general requirements that apply to all eligible crops. NAP provides coverage against loss for hemp grown for fiber, grain, seed or CBD for the 2024 crop year where no permanent federal crop insurance program is available. Producers should speak with their FSA County office about purchasing coverage, as additional restrictions may apply. The deadline to sign-up for NAP coverage is **March 15**.

FSA is accepting contract offers for General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres **through March 29**. CRP provides landowners with annual rental payments for putting

environmentally sensitive acres into resource-conserving practices. FSA will announce the dates for Grassland CRP signup in the near future. Contact your FSA County office for additional information about the CRP process.

The signup period for the [Dairy Margin Coverage \(DMC\) Program](#) continues through **April 29, 2024**. If you are a dairy producer, please be sure to contact your County FSA office about this important safety net program, which provides price support to help offset milk and feed price differences.

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.

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

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 FSA, provide vital income support to farmers who experience substantial declines in crop prices or revenues for the 2024 crop year.

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.

More Information

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

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. 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](#).

FSA Announces CRP General Signup for 2024

FSA announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can now sign up for the general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) **through March 29, 2024**.

As one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the U.S., CRP offers a range of conservation options to farmers, and landowners. It has been an especially strong opportunity for farmers with less productive or marginal cropland, helping them re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and support wildlife habitat.

General CRP

General CRP helps producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Additionally, General CRP includes a Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by helping producers and landowners establish trees and permanent grasses, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. General CRP is one of several ways agricultural producers and private landowners can participate in the program.

Other CRP Options

This past January FSA began accepting applications for the [Continuous CRP](#) signup. Under this enrollment, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

The USDA also offers financial assistance to producers and landowners enrolled in CRP to improve the health of their forests through the [Forest Management Incentive](#) (FMI), which can help participants with forest management practices, such as brush management and prescribed burning.

FSA will announce the dates for [Grassland CRP](#) signup in the near future.

Producers with expiring CRP acres can use the [Transition Incentives Program](#) (TIP), which incentivizes producers who sell or enter a long-term lease with a beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher who plans to sustainably farm or ranch the land.

How to Sign Up

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local [USDA FSA County office](#) to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

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
- Justin Dueitt; 614-255-2427 dueitt@usda.gov
- Jennifer Brown; 614-255-2391 brown@usda.gov
- Marcy Lucas; 740-885-3319 lucas@usda.gov
- Evan Kohler; 614-255-2411 kohler@usda.gov
- Randy Monhemius; 614-255-2424 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.

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](#).

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
- Justin Dueitt; 614-255-2427 dueitt@usda.gov
- Jennifer Brown; 614-255-2391 brown@usda.gov
- Marcy Lucas; 740-885-3319 lucas@usda.gov
- Evan Kohler; 614-255-2411 kohler@usda.gov
- Randy Monhemius; 614-255-2424 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.

Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Signup Continues

Dairy producers can now 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 continues through April 29, 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](#).

March 2024 Loan and Interest Rates

Farm Operating Loans, Direct	-- 4.875%
Farm Ownership Loans, Direct	-- 5.250%
Limited Resource Loans	-- 5.000%
Farm Ownership Loans, Down Payment	-- 1.500%
Farm Ownership – Joint Financing	-- 3.250%
Emergency Loans	-- 3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 3 year	-- 4.250%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 5 year	-- 4.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 7 year	-- 4.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 10 year	-- 4.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan, 12 year	-- 4.250%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans, 15 year	-- 4.375%
Commodity Loans	-- 5.875%

Dates to Remember

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 29 - Deadline to submit an offer for General CRP Signup 62.

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

April 29 --- Deadline to sign-up for the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC).

May 27 ---- Memorial Day Holiday. USDA Service Centers Closed.

May 31 ---- Deadline to apply for 2023 commodity loans and LDP's on feed grains, soybeans, pulse crops.

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.

Ohio FSA State Office

200 North High Street
Room 540 Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-255-2441

Visit the Ohio FSA website at: www.fsa.usda.gov/oh

State Executive Director:
Dr. John Patterson

Administrative Officer:
Traci Garza

Conservation Chief:
Brandi Koehler

Farm Loan Chief:
Darren Metzger

Price Support Chief:
Trevor Kerr

*Production Adjustment / Compliance and Risk
Management Chief:*
Matt Kleski

Ohio FSA State Committee Members

Theodore Finnarn, Chairperson
Fred Deel
Tracy Hundley
Thomas Jackson, Jr.
Mark Mechling