

May 2021

Message from Acting FSA State Executive Director Matthew Richter



RI Farm Service Agency (FSA)

It's getting to be the busy time of year again for our producers. Although we are in an abnormally dry spring I have hope that we will get some more rain soon. Here at the office we have been reaching out to producers that may have been passed over with the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2). We also have a new employee Tom Demers who we are trying to get trained up before acreage reporting!

There are nine upcoming virtual workshops beginning in June on risk management and marketing. Each virtual session will be held on Thursday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm starting on June 3rd, June 17th, July 8th, July 22nd, August 12th, August 26th, September 16th, September 30th and October 14th.

To register, please visit <https://cvent.me/gqZLKy>. There is a \$25.00 non-refundable registration fee. For questions, please contact Peggy Siligato at (401) 640-0484 Siligato@uri.edu.

We are in the office and available for a visit with an appointment. If you need help applying for our programs or need assistance filling out forms, feel free to schedule a time to see us. As always we are here to help our Rhode Island producers. Hope to see you soon.

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NRCS announces Conservation Stewardship Program sign-up in Rhode Island



The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rhode Island has announced that the next deadline for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications to be considered for funding in fiscal year 2021 is **June 4, 2021**.

Through CSP, NRCS helps farmers and forest landowners earn payments for expanding conservation activities while maintaining agricultural production on their land. CSP also encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, farmers and forest landowners should contact the Rhode Island NRCS office at 401-828-1300 as soon as possible and apply by June 4th to be considered for current funding.

[READ MORE](#)

Share your planting season experience for #Plant2021



After a long winter and a challenging year, spring has finally come. As the world around us bursts into song and color, our farmers will begin to work the soil they've protected all winter and plant the seeds they will nurture for months to come. Later this year, the fruits of their labor will become the food that feeds our communities, the fiber that clothes our families, and the fuel that powers industries.

For many, 2020 was the first year they'd ever seen an empty shelf at the grocery store. And for the first time, many people realized how much they take farming and the people who make it possible for granted. Fewer and fewer Americans understand what our farmers do, who they are, and the hard work they put in. Let's change that.

This planting season, let Farmers.gov showcase your work by participating in the #Plant2021 campaign. We'll share your story on @FarmersGov on social media and a nationwide [storymap](#). Here's how:

Using your smartphone or digital camera, take photos of what's happening on your operation during planting season. Videos may be too large to email as attachment, so you can email them to us via mail drop (iPhone), Google Photos (Android), or any other file sharing service. A few ideas:

- If you're comfortable, we'd love to see the people that make it happen set against the backdrop of your agricultural operation.
- Take a photo from inside the tractor cab so we can see what you see.
- Photos at sunrise or sunset are always beautiful!
- Behind-the-scenes photos showing us the amount of planning and preparation it takes to have a successful planting season are welcomed.
- Emerging (baby) crops.

Submit your photos/videos along with the following information to us at SM.FP.Social@usda.gov:

- Your name if you're comfortable sharing.
- Location of the operation (city or county and state).
- Information about what's in the photo/video and what's being planting.
- Your thoughts about this year's planting season. Is this year different from previous years? How do you feel about the season? What are you hopeful about?
- If your operation has a Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram account, please include it so that we can tag you.

Please note that by submitting your photo/video, you are granting USDA permission to use these materials for outreach and education purposes. Follow [@FarmersGov](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#), and we look forward to sharing your story!

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NRCS awards new partnership project in Rhode Island to help mitigate climate change and protect natural resources

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has announced that it is investing \$330 million nationwide in 85 locally driven, public-private partnerships to address climate change, improve the nation's water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability, including a project in Rhode Island. Projects are awarded through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).



The [Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Forest Environment](#) and ten partners will permanently protect over 2,500 acres of critical, privately owned forest lands to combat fragmentation and improve

wildlife habitat. Contributions from three project partners will complement \$4,033,450 in RCPP funding and protect additional lands as part of the overall initiative.

[READ MORE](#)

USDA announces Pandemic Assistance for Producers to distribute resources more equitably



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is establishing new programs and efforts to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and producers who felt the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions. The new initiative—**USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers**—will reach a broader set of

producers than in previous COVID-19 aid programs.

USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion toward the new programs. The Department will also develop rules for new programs that will put a greater emphasis on outreach to small and socially disadvantaged producers, specialty crop and organic producers, timber harvesters, as well as provide support for the food supply chain and producers of renewable fuel, among others. Existing programs like the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) will fall within the new initiative and, where statutory authority allows, will be refined to better address the needs of producers.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers was needed, said Vilsack, after a review of previous COVID-19 assistance programs targeting farmers identified a number of gaps and disparities in how assistance was distributed as well as inadequate outreach to underserved producers and smaller and medium operations.

USDA will reopen sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has committed at least \$2.5 million to improve outreach for CFAP 2 and will establish partnerships with organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers – 4 Parts

Part 1: Investing \$6 Billion to Expand Help & Assistance to More Producers

USDA will dedicate at least \$6 billion to develop a number of new programs or modify existing proposals using discretionary funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act and other coronavirus funding that went unspent by the previous administration.

Part 2: Adding \$500 Million of New Funding to Existing Programs

USDA expects to begin investing approximately \$500 million in expedited assistance through several existing programs this spring, with most by April 30.

Part 3: Carrying Out Formula Payments under CFAP 1, CFAP 2, CFAP AA

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, enacted December 2020 requires FSA to make certain payments to producers according to a mandated formula. USDA is now expediting these provisions because there is no discretion involved in interpreting such directives, they are self-enacting.

- An increase in CFAP 1 payment rates for cattle. Cattle producers with approved CFAP 1 applications will automatically receive these payments beginning in April. Information on the additional payment rates for cattle can be found on farmers.gov/cfap. Eligible producers do not need to submit new applications, since payments are based on previously approved CFAP 1 application. USDA estimates additional payments of more than \$1.1 billion to more than 410,000 producers, according to the mandated formula.
- Additional CFAP assistance of \$20 per acre for producers of eligible crops identified as CFAP 2 flat-rate or price-trigger crops beginning in April. This includes alfalfa, corn, cotton, hemp, peanuts, rice, sorghum, soybeans, sugar beets and wheat, among other crops. FSA will automatically issue payments to eligible price trigger and flat-rate crop producers based on the eligible acres included on their CFAP 2 applications. Eligible producers do not need to submit a new CFAP 2 application. For a list of all eligible row-crops, visit farmers.gov/cfap. USDA estimates additional payments of more than \$4.5 billion to more than 560,000 producers, according to the mandated formula.
- USDA will finalize routine decisions and minor formula adjustments on applications and begin processing payments for certain applications filed as part of the CFAP Additional Assistance program in the following categories:
 - Applications filed for pullets and turfgrass sod;
 - A formula correction for row-crop producer applications to allow producers with a non-Actual Production History (APH) insurance policy to use 100% of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County Option (ARC-CO) benchmark yield in the calculation;
 - Sales commodity applications revised to include insurance indemnities, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payments, and Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus payments, as required by statute; and
 - Additional payments for swine producers and contract growers under CFAP Additional Assistance remain on hold and are likely to require modifications to the regulation as part of the broader evaluation and future assistance; however, FSA will continue to accept applications from interested producers.

Part 4: Reopening CFAP 2 Sign-Up to Improve Access & Outreach to Underserved Producers

As noted above, USDA will re-open sign-up for of CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April 5, 2021.

- FSA has committed at least \$2.5 million to establish partnerships and direct outreach efforts intended to improve outreach for CFAP 2 and will cooperate with grassroots organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities to ensure they are informed and aware of the application process.

Please visit www.farmers.gov for additional information and announcements under the **USDA Pandemic Assistance to Producers** initiative, which will help to expand and more equitably

distribute financial assistance to producers and farming operations during the COVID-19 national emergency.

Updates to conservation easements strengthens protection for farmlands, grasslands and wetlands



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released the [final rule](#) for its [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), which enables agricultural producers and private landowners to protect farmlands, grasslands, and wetlands with conservation easements. The rule updates ACEP as directed by the 2018 Farm Bill and incorporates public comments made on an interim rule.

Updates to ACEP:

- Revised the definitions for beginning farmer or rancher, eligible land, farm or ranch succession plan, future viability and maintenance to provide additional clarity, especially around succession planning.

Updates to ACEP Agricultural Land Easements:

- Incorporated priority into the ACEP-ALE ranking criteria for lands enrolled in the Transition Incentives Program under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP-TIP).
- Clarified the non-federal match requirements and added new types of costs that may be used to satisfy the non-federal match requirements.
- Modified one of the regulatory deed requirements to clarify the types of changes to the easement deed or easement area that must be approved in advance by NRCS.
- Updated the regulatory language describing the United States' inspection authority to reflect the existing right of enforcement language used in ACEP-ALE conservation easements, wherein NRCS provides the agricultural land easement holder and the landowner notice and a reasonable opportunity to participate in an inspection of the easement area.
- Revised the regulatory language to specify the minimum and maximum durations for ACEP-ALE agreements based on an eligible entity's certification status under ACEP-ALE.

Updates to ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements:

- Incorporated priority into the ACEP-WRE ranking criteria for lands enrolled in the CRP-TIP that are farmed wetland and adjoining land that has the highest wetland functions and values and is likely to return to production after the land leaves CRP.

NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked and funded during enrollment periods that are set locally. For more information on ACEP, visit the [Rhode Island NRCS website](#) or contact your local [NRCS field office](#).



Rhode Island USDA

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Warwick RI 02886

RI NRCS:	401-828-1300
RI FSA State Office:	401-828-3120 Option 1
RI FSA County Office:	401-828-3120 Option 2
RI FSA Farm Loan Team:	401-828-3120 Option 3
Risk Management Agency:	919-875-4880

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