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Message from the FSA State Director

Greetings from the South Dakota State FSA Office!

In a few short days, we will reach the end of the fiscal year for the Federal Government. Like the calendar new year, the end of our fiscal year is a time to reflect on the past 12 months for the Farm Service Agency.

During this same time last year many families in South Dakota were facing prospects of below average corn and soybean harvests and an insufficient hay crop. The mood heading into the new fiscal year was not optimistic, with a short harvest and limited feed supplies on the horizon.

Then the snow came! Snow started falling in December and didn't stop until early spring, bringing upwards of 100 inches in many areas. Despite all the snow it did not contain much beneficial moisture for all the misery it created with weekly blizzards.

Livestock farmers and ranchers were faced with limited winter grazing on winter pastures and corn stalks, along with the short hay supplies. It was recipe for disaster. The spring and early summer did bring much needed rain to the western part of the state; however, the eastern part remained extremely dry until July when the rains finally fell and helped the corn and soybean crops reach a better yield than anticipated.

Despite all the weather mother nature threw at us during the past 12 months, farm and ranch families have continued to move forward. This is in part to their dedication and hard work, and the assistance provided by USDA.

As each storm hit, the Farm Service Agency has remained a steady partner offering a hand when needed. [Disaster programs](#) assisted with everything from feed purchases, to transportation, to [fence repairs](#). When the drought reduced grazing and hay production in the eastern part of the state, FSA responded in the impacted counties by opening up [CRP acres](#) for haying and grazing.

The [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) was utilized for producers who experienced heavy losses due to winter blizzards or from heat domes which settled over our state this summer.

All these challenges from mother nature were met head on by the Farm Service Agency to ensure our farm and ranch families have the support necessary to keep our nation and world fed.

Lastly, I want to remind folks who have experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021 about [Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA). IRA directs USDA to provide this assistance. Please check the link to learn more about Section 22007.

Sincerely,

Steve Dick
State Executive Director
USDA-Farm Service Agency

Message from the NRCS State Conservationist

With harvest approaching and football season kicking off, it's a great time for producers to work on their own field goals. For the next several weeks, we'll be looking at conservation practices through the lens of football. Follow along at our national [X \(formally Twitter\)](#) postings.

This is the time of year that many of our employees are working with new and existing customers in the field on new efforts towards natural resource management. Often, the resulting decisions are then part of a request for financial assistance. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 is providing significantly more funding to our existing programs. Activities the IRA funding can help with include cover cropping, reducing tillage, grazing management,

grass plantings, fertilizer management, tree planting, and more. See your [local NRCS](#) office to ask how the IRA funding can help you.

Additionally, our next Tribal Conservation Advisory Council meeting is scheduled to be held virtually on Thursday, September 28, 2023, starting at 10 a.m. CDT. These meetings are an opportunity to hear from Tribal natural resource leaders and others while sharing opportunities for collaboration with NRCS. I invite those interested to visit our [Tribal Assistance webpage](#) for details and contact information.

Thank you to all SD farmers, ranchers, land managers, landowners, and conservation partners who are moving the needle of conservation in our state.

Sincerely,

Tony Sunseri
State Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Important Dates & Deadlines

September 29, 2023 – Last day to request records from FSA for Discrimination Financial Assistance Program Application

October 9, 2023 - USDA Offices closed for Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day Holiday

October 16, 2023 – Application deadline for Milk Loss Program

October 31, 2023 – Application deadline for Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

November 1, 2023 – Application deadline for Organic Certification Cost Share Program

November 15, 2023 – Fall Acreage Reporting Deadline for Fall-Seeded Small Grains

Application Period Open for Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

The application period is now open for a new financial assistance program under Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. The application process will close on October 31. Borrowers will have the option to apply for assistance online via 22007apply.gov or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at 22007apply.gov. The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program. Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970, or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more

information as it becomes available. It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, you can go to <https://22007apply.gov>, and subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

For more information on documentation requirements, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage

For the 2023 crop year, NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends. If an independent assessment is used to determine the loss, producers have 180 days to file an application for payment.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

Obtaining Payments Due to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer's date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

For FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325 to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the deceased participant, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

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.

Borrower Training for Farm Loan Customers

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency (FSA) customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicants develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a

farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.

Disaster Set-Aside Program for Farm Loan Borrowers

Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and relieves immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

What Are Your Field Goals?

With harvest approaching and football season kicking off, it's a great time for producers to work on their own field goals. For the next several weeks, we'll be looking at conservation practices through the lens of football.

In some ways, being a farmer or rancher is like being a coach. You assess the landscape, develop a strategy, cultivate a team, and refine your tactics each season as you find the plays that work. All the while, your fans here at Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are proud to support and cheer you on, winning season after winning season.

First Quarter

One of the first and most important steps is to develop a game plan. Ask yourself: What's working well? What could be improved? How can you best navigate your opportunities and challenges to reach your goals?

Our conservation experts can help you answer all those questions. We'll meet with you, walk your land with you, and help develop a [conservation plan](#) customized to match your field goals. This tailored gameplan will help you develop a playbook for many successful seasons.

Second Quarter

No successful farmer goes it alone; you're going to need to recruit a winning team. But if you create the right conditions, you'll attract the most talented players nature can provide. Practice makes perfect, and we'll discuss some tried and true practices that will attract a deep bench of [soil microbes](#), [pollinators](#), [beneficial insects](#), and other key players. With the right team, you'll grow like never before.

Halftime Report

Stay tuned while we check in with experts to provide play-by-play commentary of key moments, identify the most valuable players and offer advice for avoiding unforced errors and fumbles. Then it is time to take what you've learned, make mid-game adjustments and lead your team to victory in the second half.

Third Quarter

You've found your stride and things are growing well, but there's always room for a bit more optimization and improvement. We'll highlight practices that will elevate your team to the next level, help you thrive with fewer inputs and less waste, and grow more by doing less.

Fourth Quarter

By following your conservation gameplan, adopting soil health practices, optimizing your inputs, and reducing your waste, you'll enjoy a strong home field advantage for many seasons to come. Unlike in football, your team will always stick around and grow stronger with each passing season. You will bank the benefits of conservation and enjoy the resiliency and productivity of healthy soil.

No matter which of these goals you are looking to accomplish on your farm, experts from USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS), [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) and [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) are available to help you accomplish them. **For more information on how NRCS, FSA and RMA can help you kick this next growing season through the uprights, contact your local service enter by visiting farmers.gov/service-locator.**

Conservation Practices Can Protect Livestock from Harmful Algal Blooms This Summer

Summer is the season for freshwater harmful algal blooms, which can produce toxins that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has several conservation practices that may help farmers and ranchers protect animals and people by restricting access to contaminated water or providing alternate water sources.

The ABCs of HABs

Freshwater harmful algal blooms (HABs) are usually caused by rapid growth of blue-green algae (known as cyanobacteria) in water bodies such as lakes, ponds, and streams. These organisms can produce toxins (known as cyanotoxins) that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. Contacting or ingesting contaminated water (including water spray or mist) can result in irritation, illness, or even death.

Cyanobacteria are naturally found in water bodies, so they cannot be eradicated. Instead, it's important to understand how and why blooms occur. Cyanobacterial blooms and their potential toxicity often are a result of excess nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, in water bodies. Excess nutrients can come from adjacent agricultural lands, livestock waste, and leaky septic systems, among other sources. HABs typically form in summer, when warm, nutrient-rich, stagnant waters and more frequent sunlight increase the opportunity for their growth.

Treatment of current HABs involves chemical, biological, or mechanical treatment targeted directly at the contaminated waters. Prevention of future HABs involves changing the conditions that favor cyanobacteria, including nutrient management of the surrounding land and trapping or treating nutrient losses to waterbodies.

Risks HABs pose to livestock, working animals, and pets

Symptoms* of cyanotoxin exposure in animals include:

- vomiting
- excessive salivation
- fatigue
- staggered walking
- difficulty breathing
- weakness
- convulsions
- liver failure

In severe cases, HAB poisoning can lead to death. Therefore, any potential intoxication needs to be immediately addressed by qualified professionals.

NRCS is not the authority on HAB symptoms in animals and humans. Please refer to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#) for further information on HAB symptoms or contact your state or county health department.

Steps you can take if a potential exposure to cyanotoxins has occurred:

1. Eliminate animal access to the suspected contaminated water source.
2. Wash animals with clean water and monitor for symptoms of exposure to cyanotoxins. Isolate any animals exhibiting symptoms and seek veterinary care as soon as possible.
3. An alternative source of livestock drinking water might be needed.

4. Contact the appropriate state agency for sampling and testing guidance to test the water source for HABs and cyanotoxins. It is not safe for landowners to sample the water themselves without proper personal protective equipment and procedures.
5. If a HAB occurs, there is potential for recurrence. Therefore, the waterbody should be monitored.
6. Adopt conservation practices that reduce the risk of livestock exposure to HABs and prevent and reduce nutrient loading to waters to minimize the risk of future HABs occurrences.

Reduce livestock exposure to HABs

If HABs or cyanotoxins have been detected in a water body, preventing exposure by restricting access is key to ensuring the health and well-being of people, livestock, working animals and pets on the farm.

NRCS has several conservation practices that may be useful to exclude livestock from contaminated waters or provide alternative water sources. Some examples are:

- Fencing
- Pond
- Access control
- Water well
- Watering facility

For more information or assistance:

To learn more about how NRCS can help address HAB concerns or other natural resource concerns, visit the [NRCS website](#) or contact NRCS at your [local USDA Service Center](#).

RMA Announces Changes to Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Policies

USDA announced that it is improving crop insurance options for small and diversified farmers through improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and Micro Farm insurance plans. These updates are part of USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) efforts to increase participation and access to crop insurance.

Improvements to WFRP for the 2024 policy year include:

- Allowing all eligible producers to qualify for 80% and 85% coverage levels.
- Allowing producers to purchase catastrophic coverage level policies for individual crops with WFRP.
- Expanding yield history to a 10-year maximum (from 4 years) for all crops not covered by another federal crop insurance policy.
- Making the policy more affordable for single commodity producers.

- Allowing producers to customize their coverage by choosing whether WFRP will consider other federal crop insurance policies as primary insurance when calculating premium and revenue to count during claim time.

Improvements to Micro Farm for the 2024 policy year include:

- Moving the sales closing date to a less busy time of year to help agents dedicate time to marketing the program. This is important specifically for producers that are purchasing Micro Farm for the first time as it provides additional time for agents to assist growers with important risk management decisions.
- Allowing producers to purchase other Federal crop insurance with Micro Farm.
- Allowing vertically integrated entities to be eligible for Micro Farm.
- Making the Expanding Operations feature available with Micro Farm.

About WFRP and Micro Farm:

WFRP and Micro Farm policies provide a risk management safety net for all commodities grown on a farm under one policy. Both policy options were designed to meet the needs of specialty, organic (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity preserved, specialty, or direct markets. The Micro Farm insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$350,000 in approved revenue, and WFRP covers any farm with up to \$17 million in insured revenue. RMA introduced Micro Farm in 2021.

Currently, producers hold 1,784 WFRP policies covering \$2.17 billion in liabilities, and they hold 93 Micro Farm policies covering \$6.15 million in liabilities.

More Information

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](#).



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