

In This Issue:

- [USDA Establishes New Farm Service Agency Urban County Committee in Memphis](#)
- [USDA Extends Deadline for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Until August 11](#)
- [Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination](#)[USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#)
- [USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#)
- [Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committee](#)

USDA Establishes New Farm Service Agency Urban County Committee in Memphis



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is establishing a new urban county committee in Memphis, joining 26 other cities with a committee focused on delivery of USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs to urban producers. County committee members make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally, and this new urban county committee in Memphis is part of USDA's broad support for urban and innovative agriculture.

Urban agricultural producers who participate in USDA programs in these cities or cooperate with USDA programs by providing information about their farming operation are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting in their local urban county committee elections. FSA will share more information on the nomination process and elections for this new urban county committee.

This urban county committee in Memphis was announced last week by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small as part of a significant investment in

urban agriculture. The announcement included a total of 10 new urban county committees and 17 new Urban Service Centers. Other cities with new urban county committees include:

- Boston, Mass.
- Columbia, S.C.
- Denver, CO
- Houston, TX
- Jackson, MS
- Kansas City, MO
- Las Vegas, NV
- Little Rock, AR
- Pittsburgh, PA

Support for Urban Agriculture

To help strengthen urban county committees and other urban agriculture investments, USDA is investing \$40 million, made possible by President Biden's American Rescue Plan, into partnerships with community-based organizations. Two of those partnerships include:

- Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program and Cornell University's Small Farm Center, which will support local partner organizations and urban county committee members across the country by providing guidance and training on the practices and assistance most needed by urban agricultural producers, holding regular meetings to assess successes and barriers in each location, and gathering data to analyze the effectiveness of programs and provide recommendations to increase future participation.
- To Improve Mississippi Economics, Inc. (TIME, Inc.), whose mission is to provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to urban agricultural producers and organizations that provide access to healthy food in impoverished communities. TIME, Inc. will work in collaboration with FSA and local leaders across the nation to fund partnerships with organizations in the 10 cities where USDA will create new urban county committees in 2024.

The new urban county committee is part of USDA's broader USDA investment in urban agriculture in Memphis. Other efforts include:

- [Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production competitive grants](#), including one to Alpha Omega Veterans Services to expand its original partnership with Memphis Tilth to increase food production for distribution in multiple food insecure neighborhoods in Memphis.
 - Inviting community gardens to join the [People's Garden initiative](#).
-

USDA Extends Deadline for Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Until August 11

USDA's Farm Service Agency is extending the deadline for the new Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) to Aug. 11, 2023. This extension gives organic dairy producers more than two additional weeks to apply for the program. ODMAP helps producers mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs, and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. This assistance will help keep organic dairy operations sustainable until markets return to more normal conditions.



Organic dairy producers should apply by August 11, 2023 at their local USDA Service Center. [Learn more.](#)

Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

The program website, 22007apply.gov, is now open. 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.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at 22007apply.gov or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process will be open from July 7 to October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a

first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - 22007apply.gov, which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

On March 1, 2023, USDA shared initial [details on how the Section 22007 program will work](#), including that the Inflation Reduction Act specifies the Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for providing this assistance through qualified nongovernmental entities, under standards set by USDA. USDA entered into agreements with vendors and cooperators in May.

In addition to the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) opening today, the Inflation Reduction Act also created several other programs that are helping USDA rebuild trust, address systemic issues and improve service to people who may have been underserved by USDA in the past. Information about USDA's equity agenda and progress is available at www.usda.gov/equity.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is **free**.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, promoting competition and fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building

new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

USDA is accepting more than 1 million acres in this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup. This is one of several signups that USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is holding for the program. The results for CRP General signup reflect the continued importance of CRP as a tool to help producers invest in the long-term health, sustainability, and profitability of their land and resources. Offers for new land in this General CRP signup totaled about 295,000 acres nationwide. Producers submitted re-enrollment offers for 891,000 expiring acres, reflecting the successes of participating in CRP longer term. The total number of CRP acres will continue to climb in the coming weeks once FSA accepts acres from the Grassland CRP signup, which closed May 26. Additionally, so far this year, FSA has received 761,000 offered acres for the Continuous CRP signup, for which FSA accepts applications year-round. The number of accepted acres that are enrolled in General CRP will be confirmed later this year. Participating producers and landowners should also remember that submitting and accepting a CRP offer is the first step, and producers still need to develop a conservation plan before contracts become effective on October 1, 2023. Each year, during the window between offer acceptance and land enrollment, some producers ultimately decide not to enroll some accepted acres, without penalty.

General CRP Signup

The General CRP Signup 60 ran from February 27 through April 7, 2023. Through CRP, producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve soil health and water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on agricultural land. In addition to the other well-documented benefits, lands enrolled in CRP are playing a key role in climate change mitigation efforts across the country. In 2021, FSA introduced improvements to the program, which included a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This incentive provides an annual 3, 5, or 10 percent incentive payment based on the predominant vegetation type for the practices enrolled – from grasses to trees to wetland restoration.

Other CRP Signups

[Grassland CRP](#) is a working lands program that helps producers and landowners protect grassland from conversion while enabling haying and grazing activities to continue. Lands enrolled support haying and grazing operations and promotes plant and animal biodiversity. Lands are also protected from being converted to uses other than grassland. This year's

signup for Grassland CRP ran from April 17 through May 26. [Continuous CRP](#), in which producers and landowners can enroll 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. Continuous CRP includes the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement ([SAFE](#)) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program ([FWP](#)), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). In CREP, which is available in certain geographies, partnerships with States, Tribes, and other entities are leveraged for participants to receive a variety of added incentives and flexibilities. Also available is the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) initiative. [CLEAR30](#), a signup opportunity under that initiative available nationwide, gives producers and landowners across the country the opportunity to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

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

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committee

USDA is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and they may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area. Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-

year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

Urban and Suburban County Committees

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. FSA established county committees specifically focused on urban agriculture. The urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the new county committees may address areas such as food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction.

Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Urban county committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs and serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. Urban farmers should use an

Nomination forms and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023.

Tennessee State Office

579 U.S. Courthouse
801 Broadway
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

Phone: 615-277-2600
Fax: 855-494-7764

State Executive Director

John Litz

State Committee

Rodger Tanner, Chairperson
Ken Givens
Reginald Marshall, Sr.
Amelia Tavalin
David Hall

Contact Your Local Service Center

[Tennessee Service Center Locator](#)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).