



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - August 20, 2021

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

CORRECTION: *The link to the National Honeybee Day 2021 video included in the message "From the FSA State Executive Director" has been updated to reflect a new link.*

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From the FSA State Executive Director



The summer is quickly passing us by, and harvest has already begun for some of us and will soon be starting for the rest of us. I encourage you to take a look at the articles in this month's edition, including a message from Kristy Oates, NRCS State Conservationist, to be sure you are not missing out on programs that may be valuable to your farm or ranch.

The Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers (PATHH) program signup period is ongoing until Oct. 15, 2021. PATHH provides relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that have experienced losses due to COVID-19. In partnership the Texas Forestry Association, Texas Logging Council and Texas A&M Forest Service, FSA will

participate in a webinar on Tuesday, Aug. 24 at 6:00 p.m., to give an overview and information on how to apply for PATHH. More info can be found at texasforestry.org.

Signup for the Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program (PLIP) continues until Sept. 17. PLIP offers assistance to livestock and poultry producers who suffered losses due to insufficient processing access during the pandemic can apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals.

This Saturday, Aug. 21, is World Honeybee Day. USDA has programs to help honey producers every step of the way – from plants to the final product. We have programs to help protect and conserve habitat, protect your investments and recover from disasters impacting your operation. Learn more by watching this [National Honeybee Day 2021 video](#).

Producers are encouraged to contact your local Service Center for an appointment before visiting the office. For more information on how USDA continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, please visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Sincerely,

Eddie Trevino
Acting State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency - Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist

NRCS continues to deliver USDA programs and services to Texas farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to the pandemic. Our staff is committed to meeting our customers' needs and putting conservation on the ground. To date, approximately \$93 million has been obligated through Farm Bill Programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agriculture Conservation Easement Program. An additional \$16.7 million has been awarded through Watershed Operations.



Our staff has been creative in communicating with producers while practicing COVID-19 safety measures. In addition to emails, phone calls and socially distanced field visits, our staff has utilized video calls with producers to discuss and demonstrate conservation practice implementation, held Microsoft Teams meetings with producers as well as created and delivered training and educational videos to share technical knowledge. Even while socially distanced, our staff has shown an impressive display of teamwork to help both producers and our agency accomplish goals in a challenging environment.

As the need for conservation planning in Texas continues to grow with population increases, so has the demand for our services, especially from beginning farmers and ranchers. To respond to this demand, we have added 70 new staff members to the NRCS Texas employee roster. The new employees are distributed across the state to address conservation needs at the local level.

As we transition into a new fiscal year, stay tuned for program announcements and special initiatives, like Source Water Protection that will offer landowners in priority areas a higher payment rate to implement conservation practices to improve water quality. NRCS will host a virtual State Technical Committee meeting in September to advance conservation work in 2022.

The NRCS webpage contains information and resources available to private landowners across Texas in addition to conservation success stories. Read about the [Schiurring family](#), four generations of organic rice farmers near El Campo, Texas, who also offer waterfowl hunting opportunities, and have continued to carry out their conservation plan during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps you manage risk through coverage for both crop losses and crop planting that was prevented due to natural disasters. The eligible or "noninsured" crops include agricultural commodities not covered by federal crop insurance.

You must be enrolled in the program and have purchased coverage for the eligible crop in the crop year in which the loss incurred to receive program benefits following a qualifying natural disaster.

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. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested.

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.

NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans

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*."

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

NRCS Texas has Conservationists to Meet Urban Ag Needs

Urban farming has increased 30 percent in the last 30 years to help overcome challenges such as food deserts and food insecurity. USDA loosely defines [urban agriculture](#) as the production, distribution, and marketing of food and other products within the geographical limits of a metropolitan area. This includes community and school gardens, backyard and rooftop plots, and nontraditional methods of caring for plants and animals within a constrained area. Some definitions also include farms that supply to urban farmers markets, community supported agriculture, or farms located within metropolitan green belts.

For NRCS, urban farming assistance began more than a decade ago when we first offered high tunnels as a conservation tool through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. To meet increasing demands for conservation technical assistance NRCS Texas has hired [six urban conservationists](#) to assist with conservation on these smaller niche farms and ranches.

Many of the urban ag producers are beginning farmers and ranchers and are coming to NRCS through our [beginning farmer and rancher](#) outreach efforts. The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to create a national and state-level beginning farmer and rancher coordinators to increase support for beginning farmers and ranchers and to build upon prior agency work. Our urban conservationists have been hosting workshops for urban agriculture groups, providing technical assistance for growing crops on small acreage, as well as working with partners to help producers find urban outlets for marketing their crops.

We have established an Urban Agriculture Subcommittee within our State Technical Committee. This committee looks at NRCS practices appropriate to urban agriculture and small acreage farms, such as high tunnels, conservation crop rotation, cover crops, field borders, wildlife habitat plantings, mulching, and integrated pest management. The committee is gathering input from farmers such as labor, materials, equipment, and mobilization. It is working with our state leadership to review practice standards and cost list information and continue adding small farm practice scenarios. The committee's efforts will help guide our agency efforts for the greatest effectiveness in urban agriculture.

To request assistance, reach out to your local service center or an urban conservationist near you. NRCS staff will be happy to visit with you about assistance we provide in urban areas.

USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for USDA funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). Applications for eligible certification expenses paid between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021, are due Nov. 1, 2021.

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Producers can be reimbursed for expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

For 2021, OCCSP will reimburse 50 percent of a certified operation's allowable certification costs, up to a maximum of \$500 for each of the following categories or "scopes:"

- crops
- wild crops
- livestock
- processing/handling
- State organic program fees.

Organic farmers and ranchers may apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the [OCCSP webpage](#), visit usda.gov/organic, or contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

Cover Crop Guidelines

The Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) worked together to develop consistent, simple and a flexible policy for cover crop practices.

Cover crops, such as grasses, legumes and forbs, can be planted: with no subsequent crop planted, before a subsequent crop, after prevented planting acreage, after a planted crop, or into a standing crop.

Termination:

The cover crop termination guidelines provide the timeline for terminating cover crops, are based on zones and apply to non-irrigated cropland. To view the zones and additional guidelines visit nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/ and click “Cover Crop Termination Guidelines.”

The cover crop may be terminated by natural causes, such as frost, or intentionally terminated through chemical application, crimping, rolling, tillage or cutting. A cover crop managed and terminated according to NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines is **not** considered a crop for crop insurance purposes.

Reporting:

The intended use of cover only will be used to report cover crops. This includes crops

that were terminated by tillage and reported with an intended use code of green manure. An FSA policy change will allow cover crops to be hayed and grazed. Program eligibility for the cover crop that is being hayed or grazed will be determined by each specific program.

If the crop reported as cover only is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated properly, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop.

Crops reported with an intended use of cover only will not count toward the total cropland on the farm. In these situations, a subsequent crop will be reported to account for all cropland on the farm.

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Announces Dates for Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Signups

Agricultural producers and landowners in Texas can apply for the [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) Grasslands signup from today until August 20. This year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated signup options to provide greater incentives for producers and increased the program's conservation and climate benefits, including setting a minimum rental rate and identifying two national priority zones.

The CRP Grassland signup is competitive, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide for annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Grasslands Signup

CRP Grasslands helps Texas landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as working grazing lands. Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and provides important carbon sequestration benefits.

FSA has updated the Grasslands Signup to establish a minimum rental rate of \$15 per acre, which will benefit 1,300 counties.

To focus on important wildlife corridors, FSA also identified [National Grassland Priority Zones](#), providing extra incentives to producers for enrolling grasslands in important migratory corridors and environmentally sensitive areas – the Greater Yellowstone Elk Migration Corridor and the Severe Wind Erosion – Dust Bowl Zone. Counties within these two zones get extra ranking points as well as \$5 added to their rental rate. The [CRP Grasslands Ranking Factors fact sheet](#) has additional information.

How to Sign Up

To enroll in the CRP Grasslands signup, producers and landowners should contact USDA by the August 20 deadline. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Contact your [Service Center](#) to set up an in-person or phone appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

More Information on CRP

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits. The program marked its 35-year anniversary this past December.

USDA Announces Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing up to \$200 million to provide relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that have experienced losses due to COVID-19 as part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. Loggers and truckers can apply for assistance through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) July 22 through Oct. 15, 2021. The Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers program (PATHH) is administered by FSA in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, authorized this critical assistance for the timber industry. Timber harvesting and hauling businesses that have experienced a gross revenue loss of at least 10% during the period of Jan. 1 and Dec. 1, 2020, compared to the period of Jan. 1 and Dec. 1, 2019, are encouraged to apply.

Program Details

To be eligible for payments, individuals or legal entities must be a timber harvesting or timber hauling business where 50% or more of its gross revenue is derived from one or more of the following:

- Cutting timber.
- Transporting timber.
- Processing of wood on-site on the forest land (chipping, grinding, converting to biochar, cutting to smaller lengths, etc.).

Payments will be based on the applicant's gross revenue received from Jan. 1, 2019, through Dec. 1, 2019, minus gross revenue received from Jan. 1, 2020, through Dec. 1, 2020, multiplied by 80%. FSA will issue an initial payment equal to the lesser of the calculated payment amount or \$2,000 as applications are approved. A second payment will be made after the sign-up period has ended based upon remaining PATHH funds.

The maximum amount that a person or legal entity may receive directly is \$125,000.

Applying for Assistance

Loggers and truckers can apply for PATHH beginning on July 22 by completing form FSA-1118, Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program application, and certifying to their gross revenue for 2019 and 2020 on the application. Additional documentation may be required. Visit farmers.gov/pathh for more information on how to apply.

Applications can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery, or via electronic means. To find a local FSA office, loggers and truckers can visit farmers.gov/service-locator. They can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

Supervised Credit from FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans are considered supervised credit. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Our goal is to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. FSA staff will advise borrowers on developing strategies and a plan to meet your goals and graduate to commercial credit. FSA borrowers are responsible for the success of their farming operation, but FSA staff will help in an advisory role, providing the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local USDA [Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.



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