



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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From the FSA State Executive Director



FSA county offices have been hard at work completing program enrollments and issuing payments. While we are quickly approaching the end of the year, we encourage all producers to make sure business is taken care of early to avoid a last-minute rush.

As a reminder, livestock producers may be eligible for assistance through the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) for 2021 grazing losses. To date, 144 counties in Texas have met the qualifying drought ratings that trigger eligibility for LFP. Applications for 2021 losses will be accepted through Jan. 31, 2022. Visit the FSA [Texas webpage](#) for a list of eligible counties and grazing crops.

FSA is currently advertising vacancies for student internships for Summer 2022 to provide students enrolled in a variety of educational institutions, from high school to graduate

level, with paid work opportunities to explore federal careers while in school. Internship vacancies and other career opportunities can be viewed online by searching Farm Service Agency and Texas at USAJOBS.gov.

While most FSA offices are open for scheduled, in-person appointments, our offices continue to take phone and virtual appointments, and we encourage you to prepare and complete as much business as you can during your appointment. Please be sure to call first to make an appointment before visiting your [local FSA office](#).

Sincerely,

Eddie Trevino
Acting State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency - Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist

We recently announced our Fiscal Year 2022 funding application deadlines for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in Texas. The first funding application deadline is October 29, 2021, and the second funding application deadline is February 11, 2022.



We accept program applications year round, but deadlines are announced to rank and fund eligible conservation projects. Producers interested in signing up for EQIP should submit applications to their local USDA service center or call their local office to make an appointment. If already a USDA client, a producer can submit an application online via Farmers.gov.

Producers in the Texas High Plains will have an additional opportunity to obtain conservation assistance through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to Pheasants Forever to increase quality habitat for lesser prairie chicken populations and other southwestern grassland dependent wildlife populations in the Playa Lake region. The goal is to design 75 plans to improve management on 30,000 acres of private working lands. Producers can check on opportunities at their local NRCS office.

In an eight-county area along the Texas coast, producers can participate in Texas Mid-Coast Initiative to conserve priority wetland habitats for migratory birds and other State and federally listed species through restoration and enhancement. NRCS, along with our partners—Ducks Unlimited, the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, and Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program—are seeking landowners in Aransas, Calhoun, Goliad, Jackson, Matagorda, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria counties wanting to enroll wetlands into a conservation easement. These activities will improve habitat conditions for fish and wildlife and improve the overall health of freshwater flows from streams and riparian areas into the coastal bays and estuaries.

Again, this year, we are featuring photos and stories from farmers across the country as they harvest their crops on the @FarmersGov social media feed. To be a part of the Fill the Feed and Feed the World for #Harvest2021 follow these steps:

- Collect photos or a video depicting what's happening on your operation as you harvest.
- If you're comfortable, include the people that make it happen, like friends and family.
- Write an email to FP.Social@usda.gov, attach your photos/video, and tell us:
- Your name, the location of your operation, and the name of your operation
- Your operation's Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter pages, if you have them
- What you are harvesting this year
- Where your harvest goes and how is it used
- Your personal thoughts on this year's harvest season

This month, I invite you to read about the great forest management work being done by Michael Weerts, manager of the [Weerts Family Farm](#) in Cass County, Texas. He recently received the Texas Region IV Outstanding Forestry Conservationist from the Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the 2021 Outstanding Forestry Conservationist from the Marion-Cass Soil and Water Conservation District for excellence in forestry conservation.

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

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.

Applying for NAP Payments

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to you for crops that aren't eligible for crop insurance to protect against lower yields or crops unable to be planted due to natural disasters including freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, flood, excessive heat and qualifying drought (includes native grass for grazing), among others.

In order to participate, you must obtain NAP coverage for the crop year by the applicable deadline using form CCC-471 "Application for Coverage" and pay the service fee. Application closing dates vary by crop. Producers are also required to submit an acceptable crop acreage report. Additionally, NAP participants must provide:

- The quantity of all harvested production of the crop in which the producer held an interest during the crop year
- The disposition of the harvested crop, such as whether it is marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended
- Acceptable crop production records (when requested by FSA)

Producers who fail to report acreage and production information for NAP-covered crops could see reduced or zero NAP assistance. These reports are used to calculate the approved yield.

If your NAP-covered crops are affected by a natural disaster, notify your FSA office by completing Part B of form CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 days of the final harvest date. For hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops, you must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent.

To receive benefits, you must also complete Parts D, E, F and G of the CCC-576 "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment" within 60 days of the last day of coverage for the crop year for any NAP covered crops. The CCC-576 requires acceptable appraisal information. Producers must provide evidence of production and note whether the crop was marketable, unmarketable, salvaged or used differently than intended.

Eligible crops must be commercially produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

For more information on NAP, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

Overview of Emergency Disaster Declarations and Designations

Farmers and ranchers know all too well that natural disasters can be a common, and likely a costly, variable to their operation. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has emergency assistance programs to provide assistance when disasters strike, and for some of those programs, a disaster designation may be the eligibility trigger.

FSA administers four types of disaster designations.

USDA Secretarial Disaster Designation

- The designation process can be initiated by individual farmers, local government officials, State governors, State agriculture commissions, tribal councils or the FSA State Executive Director
- This designation is triggered by a 30-percent or greater production loss to at least one crop because of a natural disaster, or at least one producer who sustained individual losses because of a natural disaster and is unable to obtain commercial financing to cover those losses
- In 2012, USDA developed a fast-track process for disaster declarations for severe drought. This provides for a nearly automatic designation when, during the growing season, any portion of a county meets the D2 (Severe Drought) drought intensity value for eight consecutive weeks or a higher drought intensity value for any length of time as reported by the U.S. Drought Monitor (<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>)

Administrator's Physical Loss Notification

- This designation is initiated by the FSA State Executive Director.
- The designation is triggered by physical damage and losses because of a natural disaster, including but not limited to dead livestock, collapsed buildings, and destroyed farm structures.

Presidential Designation

- A Presidential major disaster designation and emergency declaration is initiated by the Governor of the impacted state through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- This designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by a disaster of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capability of the State and local governments.

Quarantine Designation

- This designation is requested of the Secretary of Agriculture by the FSA State Executive Director.
- A quarantine designation is triggered by damage and losses caused by the effects of a plant or animal quarantine approved by the Secretary under the Plant Protection Act or animal quarantine laws.

All four types of designations immediately trigger the availability of low-interest Emergency loans to eligible producers in all primary and contiguous counties. FSA borrowers in these counties who are unable to make their scheduled payments on any debt may be authorized to have certain set asides. Additional disaster assistance requiring a designation may also be provided by new programs in the future.

For more information on FSA disaster programs and disaster designations, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/disaster.

Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guidelines:

- A married woman must sign her given name: Mrs. Mary Doe, not Mrs. John Doe
- For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent

Note, by signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Examples of documents not approved for FAXED signatures include:

- Promissory note
- Assignment of payment
- Joint payment authorization
- Acknowledgement of commodity certificate purchase

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may

sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

For additional clarification on proper signatures contact your local FSA office.

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities. Click [here](#) for more information on AFIDA.

Progression Lending from FSA

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans are considered progression lending. 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.

Lenders Can Now Apply for New Heirs' Property Relending Program

Intermediary lenders can now apply for loans through the new Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting applications today through October 29, 2021, and cooperatives, credit unions and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to apply for these competitive loans, which ultimately will help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues.

Through HPRP, FSA loans up to \$5 million at a 1% interest rate to eligible lenders. Then, those eligible lenders will reloan funds to heirs to help resolve title issues by financing the purchase or consolidation of property interests and financing costs associated with a succession plan.

How to Apply

Intermediary lenders should apply by the October 29, 2021 deadline using the [HPRP application form \(FSA-2637\)](#), which can be submitted to FSA by mail:

FSA Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs
Loan Making Division
STOP 0522
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Additionally, FSA will host a webinar on September 15 at 2 p.m. ET for interested lenders, who can register or learn more on the [FSA Outreach and Education webpage](#).

Eligible Lenders

Intermediary lenders must:

- be certified as a community development financial institution, and
- have experience and capability in making and servicing agricultural and commercial loans that are similar in nature.

If applications exceed the amount of available funds, FSA will prioritize applicants that both:

- have at least 10 years or more of experience with socially disadvantaged farmers; and
- are located in states that have adopted a statute consisting of enactment or adoption of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHPA). A list of these states is available at farmers.gov/heirs/relending.

More Information

[Frequently asked questions](#) (including those in Spanish, Thai and Chinese), the [August 3, 2021 overview webinar](#), and other resources can be found on farmers.gov/heirs/relending.

After the loans are announced, USDA will distribute information for heirs on how to apply. Information for heirs is also on farmers.gov/heirs/relending.

Be on the Lookout: New Form Required for Some NRCS Customers

If you are a producer or landowner who participates in USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) may be reaching out by mail with information about a form you'll need to fill out.

Starting this year, all producers and landowners participating or applying to participate in certain NRCS conservation programs must complete form CCC-902, Farm Operating Plan. Historically, to participate in these programs, legal entities could file either the CCC-901, Member Information or the CCC-902, while individuals were not specifically required to file the CCC-902 with FSA. Now, to ensure FSA and NRCS are properly determining payment eligibility and maximum payment limitations, all customers must have a CCC-902 on file to establish eligibility.

These changes will not affect participants who already have a Form CCC-902 with a "determined" status recorded with FSA. Customers that do not have a CCC-902 on file with FSA will be sent a letter in the mail in the coming weeks with detailed information on what is needed and how to file the form. The letter requests that the form be completed within 30 days of receiving the letter.

For added convenience, USDA is offering options for remote or in-person submission of the CCC-902. Fiscal year 2021 is considered a transition year to ensure all NRCS program participants can meet this updated filing requirement. Beginning in FY 2022, if form CCC-902 is not on file your payments may be impacted.

We can help: NRCS and FSA staff are available at [USDA Service Centers](#) nationwide to provide information and assistance to walk you through meeting this filing requirement. For more information, see the [NRCS National Bulletin 300-21-7](#) or [FSA Notice PL-293](#).

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Seeking Applicants for Collegiate Student Summer Interns

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently seeking applicants for collegiate student internships across Texas. Student trainee positions include soil conservationists, rangeland management specialists and engineers.

The USDA NRCS works in close partnership with farmers, ranchers, forest managers, non-governmental organizations, local and state governments, and other federal agencies to create and maintain healthy and productive working landscapes. These Pathway positions are normally for two consecutive summers before graduation allowing students to work in the field and the office under the mentorship of USDA NRCS staff. The hours acquired can lead to being hired full time with the agency upon graduation.

NRCS employees help stewards of agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest lands plan and implement proven conservation systems through technical and financial assistance designed to enhance productivity, improve soil and water health, and restore wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Pathways student summer internships open in Texas can be found on USAJobs by searching NRCS in Texas at www.usajobs.gov/. For more information, contact Tony Townsend at 254-742-9935 or tony.townsend@usda.gov.

For more information about NRCS and its conservation programs, visit www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov.

Battleground to Breaking Ground Program Now Taking Applications

Battleground to Breaking Ground Program is a three-phase program designed to increase the number of military veteran farmers and ranchers, as well as other beginning farmers and ranchers in Texas and beyond. While designed for active-duty military and military veterans and their families, military spouses and beginning farmers and ranchers can participate and benefit.

The program includes face-to-face and online educational training in farm management and production, individualized educational planning to support diverse agriculture business interests, and both hands-on and online learning. These, as well as follow-up mentor support and peer-to-peer learning are offered using a structured format. The program also offers an array of veteran transition, VA benefits, health and wellness, and disability coaching services.

Applications are now being accepted for Cohort 11 of the [Battleground to Breaking Ground Program](#) for active-duty military, veterans and others offered through the [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#).

There is a limit of 45 people in each cohort. Fifteen of these spaces are offered tuition-free for active duty and retired military whose applications are accepted. Successful applicants for Cohort 11 on a tuition-free basis will need to attend the “basic training” portion of the project in person. Basic training for Cohort 11 will be January 13-15, 2022 in Nixon, Texas.

Application instructions can be found on the [Texas AgrAbility](#) website. A recorded instructional webinar is available in the application course.

[Cohort 11 Application Link](#)

There are two options for Cohort 11 participation. The first is for active-duty military and veterans only. For this option, they must complete an application for one of the 15 tuition-waived spots. Once those spots are filled, additional participants will be required to pay full tuition.

[Tuition Link](#)

The second option is for all other participants. Those paying the full tuition cost can skip the application process and bypass any in-person requirements.

The cost for program basic training is \$125 for participants and \$75 for spouses. It includes meals, activities, a farm tour, the Battleground to Breaking Ground workshop and all workshop materials. Attendees are responsible for their own lodging.

The tuition cost for Phase 2 of the program is \$600, and the cost for Phase 3 is \$900.

Phases of the Battleground to Breaking Ground program

Phase 1 is an agriculture workshop. This is a day-long program covering business planning, rural business ideas, farming/ranching with a disability and funding sources for agricultural businesses.

Phase 2 involves 16 weeks of online business planning courses, individual education planning, educational webinars and additional educational modules for agencies/organizations that provide funding. It also addresses business planning, agriculture operations and management, and agricultural marketing. Participants also get information about transition services through VetAdvisors and disability services through the Texas AgrAbility program of AgriLife Extension.

Phase 3 is hands-on training involving eight months of online courses specific to the participant's area of production; 100 hours of hands-on learning through mentorship and custom-tailored learning opportunities; ongoing transition and disability support services; and monthly coaching and education planning calls.

Graduation from the Battleground to Breaking Ground program also helps participants meet the eligibility requirements for [USDA Farm Service Agency](#) low-interest farm loans. It also provides useful information on and access to additional funding sources through other loans and grants.

For questions or more information, contact Kelby Kosel at kelby.kosel@ag.tamu.edu.



USDA - Texas

**Farm Service Agency
Acting State Executive Director**

Eddie Trevino

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Conservationist**

Kristy Oates