



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - August 29, 2022

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From the FSA State Executive Director



After a historically hot and dry start to summer, parts of the state are finally beginning to receive much-needed rains, helping to alleviate drought conditions. However, for some producers, these rains may have come too much at one time. Producers who suffered failed acreage due to drought or excessive moisture are reminded to contact your local FSA office to request failed acreage credit due to disaster related conditions.

FSA continues to administer the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP), providing assistance to livestock producers that suffered eligible 2022 grazing losses. More than 95% of Texas counties are eligible for assistance

through the program; a list of eligible counties is available on the [FSA Texas webpage](#). Producers can contact your local FSA office for additional information on applying for LFP and other [drought assistance](#) programs.

USDA [recently announced](#) another installment to the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) for commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. The ERP deadline was [indefinitely extended](#) for producers to return Phase One applications to their local FSA office. While a deadline will be announced at a later date, eligible producers who receive pre-filled applications are encouraged to return those to their FSA offices as soon as possible.

We are approaching the peak of hurricane season and I want to encourage producers to take precautions to prepare and protect your family and agricultural operations. [NOAA still expects an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season](#), so having plans in place now may be essential to recovering from any potential storms. You can find hurricane preparation and recovery resources online at farmers.gov/protection-recovery/hurricane.

On a final note, we are happy to [welcome aboard](#) the members of the Texas FSA state committee. The individuals appointed to serve on this committee are:

- Committee Chair Debra Barrett – Edroy
- Cody Scogin – Raymonville
- Angie Martin – Tulia
- Armando Mandujano – Cayanosa
- Wesley Ratcliff – Oakwood

We are looking forward to working with each of these producers to serve the farmers, ranchers and landowners of Texas.

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins
State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency – Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist

As we head into September, I want to encourage agricultural producers including urban agriculture, to contact their county [USDA Farm Service Agency \(FSA\) office to obtain your farm and tract number](#), then contact your local [NRCS office](#) to work on a customized voluntary conservation plan to help you achieve your land management goals and protect the natural resources on your land. Also, applications for financial assistance programs are accepted year-round for installing recommended conservation practices in your conservation plan.



NRCS and partners have started announcing requests for applications and/or proposals for partnership programs for Fiscal Year 2023.

NRCS accepts all program applications on a continuous basis, but applications for the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) funding must be submitted to NRCS by November 4, 2022. Any applications that are received after November 4, 2022, will be considered in future funding opportunities. Application package information may be found on the [Texas NRCS Easement Program webpage](#).

The Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative, [an NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\) award recipient](#), is working with agricultural producers and private landowners within the 13-county region including Austin, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Matagorda, Victoria, Waller, and Wharton counties on conservation funding and technical assistance.

USDA will invest \$15 million this year for the [Conservation Innovation Grants \(CIG\) Classic program](#). Through CIG, grantees work to address our nation's water quality, water quantity, air quality, soil health and wildlife habitat challenges, all while supporting agricultural production. This year's funding priorities are climate-smart agriculture, addressing invasive species and conservation in urban agricultural systems. [Applications are being accepted through October 11, 2022](#). Additionally, [applications for the CIG On-Farm Trials](#) are being accepted through September 22, 2022. Private entities whose primary business is related to agriculture, nongovernmental organizations with experience working with agricultural producers, and non-federal government agencies are eligible to apply.

USDA is also awarding \$197 million for 41 locally led conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP is a partner-driven program that leverages partner resources to advance innovative projects that address climate change, enhance water quality, and address other critical challenges on agricultural land. [Texas had four projects that were selected for more than \\$21 million to implement these locally led conservation projects](#).

USDA is investing up to \$12 million in partnership agreements to expand access to conservation technical assistance for livestock producers and increase the use of conservation practices on grazing lands. NRCS is accepting proposals through the Grazing

Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) until September 22, 2022. Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, farmer and rancher organizations, state and local conservation governmental agencies, Tribal governments/organizations, land grant universities and minority serving institutions, and ag extension services.

In fiscal year 2023, USDA will invest up to \$20 million to help conservation partners nationwide protect and restore critical wetlands through the [Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership \(WREP\)](#). NRCS is prioritizing proposals that support efforts to mitigate climate change by restoring wetlands, while also prioritizing assistance to underserved communities. Last year, NRCS funded \$11 million in WREP partnerships. Proposals from partners are due September 23, 2022. WREP is part of the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#). Through WREP, states, local units of government, non-governmental organizations and American Indian tribes collaborate with NRCS through cooperative and partnership agreements. These partners work with tribal and private landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their properties. Finally, USDA is investing up to \$5 million in the [Wetland Mitigation Banking Program \(WMBP\)](#). This grant program supports the development of mitigation banks for use by agricultural producers seeking to maintain eligibility for USDA programs. Funds are available to tribes, state and local government entities, nonprofits and other organizations. [Applications are due by October 10, 2022.](#)

Upcoming events:

NRCS is partnering with the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers on their upcoming Ranch Gatherings in August and September. [Click here](#) for more information on dates and locations.

August 2022

Aug. 30-31, 2022

[Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Conference](#), (Virtual)

September 2022

Sept. 8, 2022

[Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Workshop](#)

Sept. 9, 2022

[South Texas Wildlife Conference, Cuero](#)

Sept. 13-14, 2022

[Texas Forests & Water Forum 2022](#)

Sept. 14, 2022

[Faces of Agriculture- USDA Speaker Series](#)

Sept. 22-24, 2022

[Minority Landowner 16th Anniversary Farmers & Landowners Conference](#), (Virtual)

Sept. 22-23, 2022

[Southeast Texas Urban Farm and Safety Summit](#)

Sept. 26-27, 2022

[Texas Fruit Conference](#)

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced another installment (phase) in assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021. More than 18,000 producers will soon receive new or updated pre-filled disaster applications to offset eligible crop losses. Approximately \$6.4 billion has already been distributed to 165,000 producers through USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

FSA will begin mailing pre-filled applications in late August to producers who have potentially eligible losses and:

- Received crop insurance indemnities for qualifying 2020 and 2021 disaster events after May 2, 2022.
- Received crop insurance indemnities associated with Nursery, Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) and Margin Protection (MP) policies.
- New primary policyholders not included in the initial insured producer Phase 1 mailing from May 25, 2022, because their claim records had not been filled.
- Certain 2020 prevent plant losses related to qualifying 2020 disaster events that had only been recorded in crop insurance records as related to 2019 adverse weather events and, as such, were not previously provided in applications sent earlier this year.
- New Substantial Beneficial Interest (SBI) records, including SBIs where tax identification numbers were corrected.

Producers are expected to receive assistance direct deposited into their bank account within three business days after they sign and return the pre-filled application to the FSA county office and the county office enters the application into the system.

Before applying any program payment factors or eligibility criteria, it is estimated that this next installment (phase) may generate about \$756 million in assistance.

Emergency Relief Payments to Date

This emergency relief under ERP complements ERP assistance recently provided to more than 165,000 producers who had received crop insurance indemnities and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments for qualifying losses. USDA has processed more than 255,000 applications for ERP, and to date, has made approximately \$6.4 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than

100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

Phase Two

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP will be aimed at filling gaps and provide assistance to producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing risk management programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

More Information

In addition, on Aug. 18, 2022, USDA published a technical correction to the [Notice of Funds Availability](#) for ERP and ELRP to clarify how income from the sale of farm equipment and the provision of production inputs and services to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and farm operations are to be considered in the calculation of average adjusted gross farm income. Producers whose average adjusted gross farm income is at least 75% of the producer's the average Adjusted Gross Income can gain access to a higher payment limitation.

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are authorized by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit [FSA's Emergency Relief webpage](#). A [new public-facing dashboard](#) on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty–specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard every Monday.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

USDA Announces First Three Lenders for Heirs' Property Relending Program

USDA is announcing that Shared Capital Cooperative, Akiptan, Inc. and the Cherokee Nation Economic Development Trust Authority (CNEDTA), have been approved or conditionally approved as intermediary lenders through the Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP). Once HPRP loans with these lenders close, these lenders will help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues. Additionally, USDA

encourages more intermediary lenders, including cooperatives, credit unions and nonprofit organizations to apply. More information is at farmers.gov/heirs/relending.

Heirs may apply directly to the intermediary lenders for loans to resolve land ownership and succession issues. Learn more: [USDA Announces First Three Lenders for Heirs' Property Relending Program](#)

New Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Resources Available

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the American Farmland Trust (AFT) are unveiling [new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\) resources](#) that guides entities through the Agricultural Land Easements acquisitions process. The new resources include two new factsheets that explain the NRCS Minimum Deed Terms:

- [ACEP-ALE Minimum Deed Terms with Commentary](#) – compares different options for integrating the minimum deed terms into the ALE deed.
- [ACEP-ALE Options for Integrating Minimum Deed Terms](#) - walks through the minimum deed terms and adds commentary to each section. The commentary is meant for landowners and entities and provides context and explanations for how the terms may impact agricultural operations.

The new factsheets join a suite of additional online resources developed to help landowners and entities through ACEP- ALE's application process. They can be accessed through AFT's Farmland Information Centers [publications page](#).

Press Release:

[USDA-NRCS Texas Accepting Applications for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#)

USDA Encourages You to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency encourages you to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available. You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

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. 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. 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. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production.

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.

Beginning, underserved, veterans and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage.

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. contact your local USDA Service Center at or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at [USDA's online Agent Locator](#). You can use the [USDA Cost Estimator](#) to predict insurance premium costs.

FSA is Accepting CRP Continuous Enrollment Offers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for specific conservation practices under the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Continuous Signup](#).

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. The program's long-term goal is to re-establish valuable land cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Instead they are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

For more information, including a list of acceptable practices, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Texas State Funding Available for Conservation and Water Quality Improvement Projects

USDA-NRCS is helping our partners in conservation The Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) in reminding farmers and ranchers of the opportunity to receive technical and financial assistance for certain conservation practices that address water quality concerns through [the Water Quality Management Plan Program](#).

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board administers Texas' soil and water conservation law and delivers natural resource conservation programs through the State's 216 local soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) and regional offices. TSSWCB has a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) Program that is delivered through the local SWCDs and assists farmers and ranchers in the development of a site-specific conservation plan. The plan includes appropriate best management practices to achieve a level of pollution prevention or abatement to be consistent with state water quality standards.

To obtain a WQMP, visit your local SWCD to request planning assistance. The SWCD will then work with the TSSWCB regional office to provide technical input and develop a conservation plan that best suits the landowner's needs. The local NRCS field office often assists with developing of the conservation plan.

Once the conservation plan is complete and the landowner approves, the SWCD will formalize an agreement and then the implementation process can begin.

Annual funding is available for the implementation of the WQMPs. The purpose of cost-share funding is to provide an incentive to participants or operators to install soil and water conservation land improvement measures consistent with the purpose of controlling erosion, conserving water, and protecting water quality in accordance with a WQMP certified by the TSSWCB. The intent of the WQMP Program is to see WQMPs developed and implemented permanently. Cost-share assistance is intended as an incentive and not the driving force behind the program. It is the policy of the TSSWCB to cost-share on the basis of actual cost not to exceed the average cost as determined by the local SWCDs.

Eligible person: Any individual, partnership, administrator for a trust or estate, family-owned corporation, or other legal entity who as an owner, lessee, tenant, or sharecropper, participates in an agricultural or silvicultural operation and has a certified WQMP on an operating unit within a SWCD shall be eligible for cost-share incentive funding.

Eligible Land: Any of the following categories of land shall be eligible for cost-share incentive funding:

- Land within the state that is privately owned by an eligible person.
- Land leased by an eligible person over which he/she has adequate control and which land is utilized as a part of his/her operating unit.
- Land owned by the State; a political subdivision of the State, or a nonprofit organization that holds land in trust for the state.

The funding cycle for the WQMP Program begins on September 1st of each year and applications are funded until all the money is allocated. Applications are accepted year-round.

Applications received before Thursday, September 1st, 2022 will receive priority consideration for the FY2023 WQMP Program funding, but application received after this date will still be considered.

WQMP Program agreements can be approved up to \$15,000 in cost-share assistance for the project.

To submit your application, go to your [local SWCD office](#), often in same office as NRCS, or email the forms attached on the email your [regional office](#).

For more information, please see the [WQMP Reference Guide](#), [program overview](#) document or contact your local SWCD or regional office. To locate your local SWCD visit <http://www.tsswcb.texas.gov/swcds/locatormap> and [regional office](#) location.

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.

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.

Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans

can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

USDA Service Centers Provide Free, One-on-One Help for Farmers

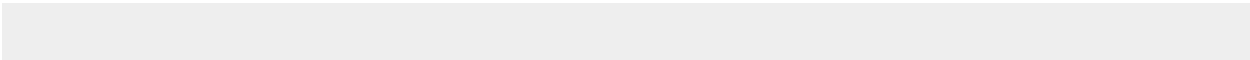
At USDA, we are committed to helping farmers complete loan applications, environmental reviews, and other paperwork free of charge. One-on-one support is available at more than 2,300 USDA Service Centers nationwide. USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff are usually co-located at these Service Centers and can help guide farmers to the best USDA assistance based on their unique goals, whether it is loans, conservation programs, or insurance.

Service Center staff can guide farmers through the process of preparing and submitting required paperwork on their own, with no need to hire a paid preparer. Language translation service is available in all USDA Service Centers, so one-on-one assistance with a Service Center employee can be translated in real time for farmers requiring it. And while some program and loan applications do have an administrative fee for filing, there is never a charge for preparation services provided by USDA staff.

Farmers who work with the USDA Service Center can:

- Establish their farm by registering for a farm number, which is required for USDA programs and assistance.
- Learn how to meet conservation compliance provisions.
- Verify eligibility for USDA programs.
- Discuss their business and conservation goals.
- Create a conservation plan.
- Fill out and file loan and program applications.

We encourage you to [check the status of your local USDA Service Center](#) and make an appointment to discuss your business needs.



USDA in Texas



Farm Service Agency

State Executive Director

Kelly Adkins

Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist

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State Committee

Debra Barrett, Committee Chair

Armando Mandujano

Angie Martin

Wesley Ratcliff

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