



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - August, 27, 2024

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**From the FSA State Executive Director**

We are approaching the peak of hurricane season and now is a good time for you to prepare and protect your family and agricultural operations. NOAA expects the [highly active hurricane season likely to continue in the Atlantic](#), so having plans in place now is essential to recovering from these storms.



Producers across Texas who were impacted by Tropical Storm Alberto and Hurricane Beryl, are encouraged to stay prepared for any future weather developments that could impact

the state. You can find hurricane preparation and recovery resources online at [farmers.gov/protection-recovery/hurricane](https://farmers.gov/protection-recovery/hurricane).

Earlier this month, FSA announced the [Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule](#). FSA is expanding opportunities for borrowers to increase profitability and make strategic investments to grow their operation by amending Farm Loan Program regulations to improve program access and delivery. You can read more about the rule change in this newsletter.

This past spring, FSA completed the rollout of our [customer kiosk campaign](#). The kiosks enable customers to access a variety of features including:

- Utilizing the Loan Assistance Tool;
- Accessing necessary information such as email, bank accounts or farm records;
- Signing FSA documents and;
- Obtaining a [Login.gov account](#), which provides access to farmers.gov level two features and other USDA and U.S. Government web resources.

Through the adoption of this new technology, FSA is promoting a reduction in the paperwork burden on county office staff and FSA customers. During your next visit to your local FSA office, take a moment to try out the customer kiosk.

I also want to remind you of [Receipt for Service](#). Federal law and USDA regulations require that a Receipt for Service be provided to any current or prospective agricultural producer or landowner who requests, in person or in writing, a benefit or service from FSA. A recent enhancement for farmers.gov for those with accounts allows you to access Receipts for Service issued after August 2, 2024. Remember that if you do not receive a receipt at the end of your visit or transaction, be sure to ask for one, it's your right.

Enjoy your upcoming Labor Day weekend. We look forward to serving you soon.

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins  
State Executive Director  
Farm Service Agency - Texas

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**From the NRCS State Conservationist**



If there is anything as Texans we have come to expect, or accept maybe, it's that the summers will be long and hot. The current summer has not disappointed. From the ag producers who work to maintain the land, to the livestock, crops and wildlife that must endure it, the heat is hard on everyone.

Fortunately, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can assist with conservation practices that help conserve water and build resilience to your operation. Practices that improve irrigation efficiency, boost soil health and manage grazing all help during this trying time of the year.

August is Water Quality Month. Being one of our most precious natural resources, we all must do our part to make sure we have sustainable, clean sources of water. Agriculture offers a major potential to support water quality improvements nationwide. NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to help producers plan and implement conservation practices that improve water quality and conserve its use.

Check out [Family roots run deep in the Texas Hill Country \(arctgis.com\)](https://arctgis.com) to learn more about a Hill Country family doing their part to enhance water quality in the Edwards Aquifer with the help of NRCS. The Edwards Aquifer is of particular importance to the area. Being the major source of water for a large portion of the Hill Country, including the San Antonio metropolitan area, the function and productivity of this aquifer is vitally important.

Another instance of water quality efforts includes the recent announcement that [USDA will invest \\$400 million](#) with irrigation districts to help farmers, while also conserving water. This funding will support irrigation districts and producers in using innovative water savings technologies and farming practices while producing water-saving commodities. The Hidalgo & Cameron Counties Irrigation District 9 in south Texas is one of the districts that has been preliminarily selected for potential inclusion in this program.

NRCS recently announced that \$22 million was awarded for 29 projects in 36 states, including 4 in Texas, that expand access to conservation technical assistance for livestock producers and increases the use of conservation practices on grazing lands. The agreements are being funded through the [Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative \(GLCI\)](#), which empowers partners to increase availability of grazing land technical assistance for livestock producers, including historically underserved producers, as well as Native American tribal governments.

As we head into September, I want to encourage you to contact your local NRCS office to work on a conservation plan to help you achieve your conservation goals. Find your local office at <https://offices.usda.gov/>. NRCS Texas employees are here to help you with

technical and financial assistance to protect and improve the natural resources on your operation.

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

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### **USDA Updates Farm Loan Programs to Increase Financial Freedom, Resilience and Profitability for Agricultural Producers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced changes to the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Loan Programs, effective Sept. 25, 2024 — changes that are intended to increase opportunities for farmers and ranchers to be financially viable. These improvements, part of the [Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule](#), demonstrate USDA's commitment to improving farm profitability through farm loans designed to provide important financing options used by producers to cover operating expenses and purchase land and equipment.

Farm loan policy changes outlined in the *Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans* rule, are designed to better assist borrowers to make strategic investments in the enhancement or expansion of their agricultural operations.

The three most notable policy changes include:

- Establishing a new low-interest installment set-aside program for financially distressed borrowers. Eligible financially distressed borrowers can defer up to one annual loan installment per qualified loan at a reduced interest rate, providing a simpler and expedited option to resolve financial distress in addition to FSA's existing loan servicing programs.
- Providing all eligible loan applicants access to flexible repayment terms that can increase profitability and help build working capital reserves and savings. By creating upfront positive cash flow, borrowers can find opportunities in their farm operating plan budgets to include a reasonable margin for increased working capital reserves and savings, including for retirement and education.
- Reducing additional loan security requirements to enable borrowers to leverage equity. This reduces the amount of additional security required for direct farm loans, including reducing the frequency borrowers must use their personal residence as additional collateral for a farm loan.

## **Additional Farm Loan Program Improvements**

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA's FSA has embarked on a comprehensive and systemic effort to ensure equitable delivery of Farm Loan Programs and improve access to credit for small and mid-size family farms. FSA has also included additional data in its [annual report to Congress](#) to provide information that Congress, stakeholders, and the general public need to hold USDA accountable on the progress that has been made in improving services to underserved producers. This year's report shows FSA direct and guaranteed loans were made to a greater percentage of young and beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as improvements in the participation rates of minority borrowers. The report also highlights FSA's microloan program's new focus on urban agriculture operations and niche market lending, as well as increased support for producers seeking direct loans for farm ownership in the face of increasing land values across the country.

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate the Farm Loan Program customer-facing business process. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a direct loan application annually, FSA has made several impactful improvements including:

- The Loan Assistance Tool that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the direct loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.
- The Online Loan Application, an interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet, and build a farm operating plan.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local USDA Service Center to pay a loan installment.
- A simplified direct loan paper application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.

USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local FSA farm loan staff to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available to assist with starting, expanding, or maintaining their agricultural operation. To conduct business with FSA, please contact your local USDA Service Center

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit, [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, 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](http://www.usda.gov).

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## **USDA Accepts Nearly 2.2 Million Acres through this year's Grassland, General, and Continuous CRP Signups**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting offers for more than 2.2 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year's Grassland, General, and Continuous [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) signups administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). With these accepted acres, enrollment is very near the 27 million CRP acreage cap.

### **Grassland CRP**

Including the nearly 1.44 million acres recently accepted in Grassland CRP for offers received in 2024, producers will have enrolled more than 10 million acres in this popular working-lands program.

Grassland CRP allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and further CRP's impacts. Grassland CRP leverages working lands practices to improve biodiversity and conserve environmentally sensitive land.

Enrolled acres help sequester carbon in vegetation and soil, while enhancing resilience to drought and wildfire. Meanwhile, producers can still conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land, which supports agricultural production.

Top states for this year's Grassland CRP signup include:

- **Nebraska** with 237,853 acres accepted
- **Colorado** with 218,145 acres accepted
- **New Mexico** with 185,619 acres accepted

Additionally, to target conservation in key geographies, USDA prioritizes land within two National Priority Zones: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Dust Bowl area. The 2024 Grassland CRP enrollment has added more than 560,000 acres in the Priority Zones, bringing the total acres to 3.8 million. By conserving working grasslands and other lands that underpin iconic big game migrations, land enrolled in these zones contributes to broader USDA conservation efforts through [Working Lands for Wildlife](#).

### **General and Continuous CRP**

FSA also has accepted nearly 200,000 acres through the General signup, bringing total acres enrolled in General CRP to 7.9 million acres. As one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the United States, CRP offers a range of conservation options to farmers, ranchers and landowners. It has been an especially strong opportunity for farmers with less productive or marginal cropland, helping them re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and support wildlife habitat.

In January 2024, FSA opened enrollment for Continuous CRP. Under this enrollment, producers and landowners can enroll in CRP 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. To date, in 2024, more than 565,000 acres have been offered through Continuous CRP bringing the total acres enrolled to 8.5 million.

Producers can still make an offer to participate in CRP through [the Continuous CRP signup](#), which is ongoing, by contacting FSA at their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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### **Biden-Harris Administration Invests Up to \$400 Million to Address Drought, Conserve Water through Production of Water-Saving Commodities**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will invest \$400 million with at least 18 irrigation districts to help farmers continue commodity production while also conserving water across the West. This funding – which will support irrigation districts and producers in using innovative water savings technologies and farming practices while producing water-saving commodities in the face of continued drought – is expected to conserve up to 50,000 acre-feet in water use across 250,000 acres of irrigated land in production, while expanding and creating new, sustainable market opportunities.

This historic funding builds on the Biden-Harris Administration’s work to conserve water, increase the efficiency of water use, upgrade existing infrastructure, and overall strengthen water security in the West. With historic water conservation enabled by President Biden’s

Investing in America agenda, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation announced in May 2024 it had [staved off the immediate possibility](#) of the Colorado River System's reservoirs from falling to critically low elevations that would threaten water deliveries and power production. Due to record conservation investments as well as improved hydrology, Lake Mead levels today, at elevation 1075 feet, are the highest since May 2021, when they were at 1073 feet. The Administration is now working to ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience by focusing on long-term water conservation in several basins across the west.

### **Partnering with Irrigation Districts to Support Water Conservation, Produce Water-Saving Commodities**

USDA worked to select irrigation districts based on several commodity production and water management-related criteria in order to maximize the ability to achieve program objectives, leveraging available data from the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation to ensure close alignment and partnership. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) provided data and analysis to support the preliminary selections. Districts that have been preliminarily selected for potential inclusion in this program include:

- Black Canyon Irrigation District, Idaho
- Brooklyn Canal Company, Utah
- Central Oregon Irrigation District, Ore.
- Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District, Ariz.
- Corcoran Irrigation District, Calif.
- East Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Wash.
- Elephant Butte Irrigation District, N.M.
- Glenn – Colusa Irrigation District, Calif.
- Greybull Valley Irrigation District, Wyo.
- Hidalgo & Cameron Counties Irrigation District 9, Texas
- Huntley Project Irrigation District, Mont.
- Imperial Irrigation District, Calif.
- Maricopa – Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District, Ariz.
- Palisade Irrigation District, Colo.
- Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Wash.



- Solano Irrigation District, Calif.
- Sutter Mutual Water Company, Calif.
- Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, Nev.

The preliminary selected districts may receive up to \$15 million each in the awards and will enter into sub-agreements with the producers participating within the district. Depending on available funding, awards to additional districts may be possible.

Producers who participate will receive payments for voluntarily reducing water consumption while maintaining commodity production. The needs of producers will determine the specific strategies for water conservation, including irrigation improvements, shifts in management practices, shifts in cropping systems, and other innovative strategies. USDA will learn from the diversity of strategies used and identify additional opportunities to maintain and expand water-saving commodity production in the future.

Participating producers and irrigation districts will commit to ensuring continued commodity production in the areas where water consumption is reduced. USDA is working to finalize agreements with the preliminarily selected districts, which will include the details of each individual district's water-saving strategies, commodities to be produced, and specific budgets. Following the finalization of those awards, producers within the participating districts will work directly through their irrigation districts to participate. USDA and the preliminarily selected districts will provide more details on the agreements and opportunities for producers to directly enroll.

### **Investing in Water Conservation in Tribal Communities and Acequias**

In addition to the preliminarily selected districts announced today, USDA is also announcing a Tribal set-aside within the program, targeting up to \$40 million in funding for additional awards within Indian Country. USDA will work with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Tribes, and Tribal producers to reduce water consumption and maintain land in agricultural production – supporting the production of water-saving commodities. USDA is partnering with BIA to use available data and ensure meaningful engagement with Tribes to establish selection criteria that reflect the specific needs and water management systems within Indian Country. Additional information for further engagement and selections will be provided in the weeks ahead.

USDA will also include targeted assistance to support water-saving commodity production for acequias, recognizing that many irrigators in the Southwest are formed under the community-based acequia model instead of the irrigation district model. Additional information regarding targeted assistance to acequias that reflects the historical nature of their water distribution structure will follow.

Additional information for further engagement with Tribes and acequias will be provided in the weeks ahead.

### **Historic Investments in Western Water Complement Water-Saving Commodities Program**

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is working to help producers and communities conserve water, manage and prepare for the effects of climate change and build drought resilience in the West through its [Western Water and Working Lands Framework for Conservation Action](#) (Western Water Framework), which was launched in 2023. The Western Water Framework describes how NRCS assistance is used to address water resource related issues in 17 states in the West. In fiscal year 2023, NRCS provided \$2.3 billion in conservation investments that help producers and communities in Western states better steward water resources, including investments that also support climate change mitigation. This total includes a boost of 9.7 percent or \$213.3 million from the Inflation Reduction Act.

The Western Water Framework includes key NRCS conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Within EQIP NRCS has created a WaterSMART Initiative (WSI), to coordinate investments with the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART investments in priority areas.

For Fiscal Year 2024, NRCS selected 9 new priority areas and is continuing to offer funding in 36 prior approved areas, making \$29.7 million in EQIP funding available through the WSI across 16 states.

EQIP and CSP provide conservation planning and funding to help with implementation of conservation practices. Practices like irrigation water management improve irrigation efficiency and mitigate climate change. Meanwhile, practices like conservation crop rotation, cover crop, residue and tillage management, no-till, and nutrient management help producers build resilience to future drought. ACEP gives producers and landowners tools to protect wetlands, grasslands and agricultural lands which can be used to conserve water.

Together, these efforts by FSA and NRCS advance USDA's efforts to create more, new, and better market opportunities, [sustainably grow agricultural productivity](#) to feed a growing population, and help farmers and natural resource managers [manage and prepare for the effects of climate change](#).

[Learn more about the Western Water Framework.](#)

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## USDA Expands Insurance Options for Specialty and Organic Growers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding crop insurance options for specialty and organic growers beginning with the 2025 crop year. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is expanding coverage options by allowing enterprise units by organic farming practice, adding enterprise unit eligibility for several crops, and making additional policy updates. This is the first of several announcements this summer, which will include the expansion of the shellfish policy in the Northeast and new coverage for grape growers in the West and beyond. These expansions and other improvements build on other recent RMA efforts to better serve specialty crop producers and reach a broader group of producers.

The following changes will be made beginning with the 2025 crop year:

- **Enterprise and Optional Units:**
  - Expand Enterprise Units (EU) to almonds, apples, avocado (California), citrus (Arizona, California, and Texas), figs, macadamia nuts, pears, prunes, and walnuts.
  - Allow non-contiguous parcels of land that qualify for Optional Units (OU) to also qualify for EU.
  - Allow EUs by organic farming practice for alfalfa seed, almonds, apples, avocado (California), cabbage, canola, citrus (Arizona, California and Texas), coarse grains, cotton, ELS cotton, dry beans, dry peas, figs, fresh market tomatoes, forage production, grass seed, macadamia nuts, millet, mint, mustard, pears, potatoes (northern, central, and southern), processing tomatoes, prunes, safflower, small grains, sunflower seed, and walnuts.
  - Expand OUs by organic practice to all remaining crops where OUs are available, and the organic practice is insurable.
- **Walnut Quality Adjustment:** Allow sunburned damaged walnuts to be eligible for indemnity payments through quality adjustment.
- **Almond Leaf Year:** Expand insurance coverage to younger trees by including trees in their fifth leaf year after being set out.
- **Processing Bean End of Insurance Period:** Extend insurance coverage in Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey by an additional 16 days.
- **Canola:** Expand insurance for canola into South Dakota and Michigan.

These revisions come through the [Expanding Options for Specialty and Organic Growers Final Rule](#) published today by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC). This Final

Rule will update the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions, Area Risk Protection Insurance Basic Provisions, and includes changes to individual Crop Provisions. The enterprise unit availability will continue to be rolled out throughout the year with each crop's contract change date and RMA will continue to evaluate expanding EUs to additional crops.

Additional changes in the June 30 Final Rule include:

- **New Breaking Acreage:**
  - Reduce administrative burdens on growers and the delivery system by removing written agreement requirements on new breaking acreage.
  - Reduce coverage penalties on perennial specialty crop producers and producers of intensively managed crops, such as alfalfa, when they move to row crop production. This allows for a seamless transition without losing crop insurance coverage.
- **Assignment of Indemnity:** Provide flexibility for an indemnity payment to be issued via automated clearing house (ACH) or other electronic means when these methods do not allow for multiple payees.
- **Good Farming Practices (GFP):** Streamline and shorten the FCIC GFP reconsideration process by closing the administrative file following FCIC's initial GFP determination.
- **Double Cropping and Annual Forage:** Clarify a producer must prove insurance history for the annual forage crop and meet the current double cropping requirements to receive a full prevented planting payment.

RMA continues to explore ways to improve risk management tools for specialty crop producers and will be announcing additional program enhancements later this summer. Some of those improvements include:

- Expanding the **Shellfish Program** to an additional 18 counties in seven states. Additional modifications include allowing insurance on seeds initially purchased smaller than 4 mm, allowing producers to use existing records for coverage in adjacent program counties, and allowing alternative yield procedures.
- Piloting the **Fire Insurance Protection – Smoke Index (FIP-SI)** crop insurance program for grapes in California for the 2025 crop year. The pilot program is an index-based endorsement to the Actual Production History (APH) Grape policy that provides additional protection against smoke damage and covers the liability between the APH policy's coverage level and 95%.

- Expanding the **Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO)** to walnuts and citrus crops and increasing premium support to be consistent with the Supplemental Coverage Option.
- Expanding the **Grapevine** insurance program to an additional 29 counties in California. Grapevine insurance offers protection against vine losses in the event of several named perils.
- Releasing new **Organic Practice Guidelines** to producers for the 2025 crop year. These guidelines are to help producers report planted or perennial acreage insured under a certified organic or transitional practice.

### **More Information**

This announcement further advances USDA's recently announced [Specialty Crops Competitiveness Initiative](#), a Department-wide effort to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops products in foreign markets, enhance domestic marketing, and improve production and processing practices.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov) or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

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### **Conduct Business Online Through the Farmers.gov Portal**

Looking for ways to do business with USDA that saves you time? Look no further than [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov).

When you create an [account](#) for the farmers.gov authenticated customer portal, you have access to self-service features through a secure login. Managing your business with [USDA's Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) and is faster than ever. From e-signing documents, viewing, printing, and exporting maps and receiving notifications of payment disbursements, a farmers.gov authenticated account makes doing business with USDA easy and secure.

#### **What can you do with your farmers.gov account?**

- View FSA Farm Loan information including interest payments, loan advances, payment history and paid-in-full/restructured loans.
- Make USDA direct farm loan payments using [the Pay My Loan feature](#).

- Access the [Online Loan Application portal](#).
- View, print and export detailed FSA farm records and farm/tract maps.
- Import precision agriculture planting boundaries, create labels containing crop information, and print both on farm tract maps.
- View and print your FSA-156EZ with farm details
- View and print your Producer Farm Data Report
- View NRCS Disbursements and Farm Loans financial activity from the past 180 days.
- View your land, access NRCS data on your conservation plans, contracts, and planning land units through the Conservation Land Area page.
- View, upload, download and e-sign NRCS documents.
- Request NRCS conservation and financial assistance, including submitting a program application.
- View detailed information on all previous and ongoing NRCS contracts, including the amount of cost- share assistance received and anticipated; and even request contract modifications, report practice completion and request practice certification.
- “Switch Profiles” to act on behalf of your entity or another individual when you have active representative authority on file

If you'd like to see the features in action and learn more about how to use them, check out the 3-5 minute [farmers.gov account video tutorials](#).

### **How do you create a farmers.gov account?**

Visit [farmers.gov/account](#) to access information about farmers.gov accounts and sign in to the site's authenticated portal. You will need a Login.gov account linked to your USDA customer record to access your farmers.gov authenticated site. Customers who are new to USDA should visit [Get Started at Your USDA Service Center](#), then go to [farmers.gov/account](#) to create a farmers.gov account.

To create a farmers.gov account you will need:

- A USDA individual customer record — A customer record contains information you have given to USDA to do business with them, like your name, address, phone number, and any legal representative authority relationships. Contact your local USDA Service Center to make sure you have an individual USDA customer record on file and your information is up to date.

- A Login.gov account — Login.gov is a sign-in service that gives people secure online access to participating government programs. You can create a Login.gov account linked to your customer record by following the directions on [farmers.gov/account](https://farmers.gov/account).
- Identity Verification — You can choose to verify your identity with Login.gov or in-person at a USDA Service Center.

In addition to the self-service features, [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov) also has information on USDA programs, farm loans, disaster assistance, conservation programs and crop insurance.

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### **Ask the Expert: A Q&A on Youth Loans with Tina Mellinger**

In this *Ask the Expert*, Tina Mellinger answers questions about Farm Service Agency (FSA) Youth Loans. Tina is a Farm Loan Manager in Ohio and has worked for FSA for 37 years. Her FSA farm loan team makes an average of around 50 loans each year, with around five of those being Youth Loans. Her entire career has been centered around loan-making. At the beginning of her career, she worked for Rural Development making home loans.

Tina grew up on a 50-cow dairy farm in southeastern Ohio. She earned an animal science and ag education degree from the Ohio State University.

To read the full blog, visit [farmers.gov/blog/ask-expert-qa-on-youth-loans-with-tina-mellinger](https://farmers.gov/blog/ask-expert-qa-on-youth-loans-with-tina-mellinger).

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### **Receipt for Service - Improving Customer Service**

Did you know that, as a customer in any USDA service center, employees are required, per federal law and USDA regulations, to provide you with a computer-generated receipt at the end of your visit? This [Receipt for Service](#) details the type of service you requested, the service and response provided by the staff, and the date and time of your visit.

The 2014 Farm Bill designated that FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD) employees are statutorily required to provide producers a receipt when a current or prospective producer or landowner interacts or engages with the Agency regarding a USDA benefit or service.

On behalf of our customers, FSA employees are required to enter receipts timely and create only one receipt per customer per visit, regardless of the number of employee interactions a customer may encounter in a single visit. A single receipt will be generated

that provides a summary of the customer's visit on behalf of the other employees who also met with the customer on the same day. Employees must also ensure that all services rendered are properly reflected in that receipt.

Issuing a receipt is required by our offices. If you do not receive a receipt, please be sure to request one. For more information, FSA's [Receipt for Service handbook](#) is now available online.

Don't leave the office without your receipt!

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## USDA in Texas

[Questions? Find Your Local Service Center | Farmers.gov](#)

### Farm Service Agency

[fsa.usda.gov/tx](http://fsa.usda.gov/tx)

### State Executive Director

Kelly Adkins

### State Committee

Debra Barrett, Committee Chair

Armando Mandujano

Angie Martin

Wesley Ratcliff

Cody Scogin

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/tx](http://nrcs.usda.gov/tx)

### State Conservationist

Kristy Oates

### Risk Management Agency

[rma.usda.gov/rmalocal/oklahoma-city-ok](http://rma.usda.gov/rmalocal/oklahoma-city-ok)

### Regional Director

Jim Bellmon