



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Vermont USDA Newsletter - February 24, 2023

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A Message From Travis Thomason, Vermont NRCS State Conservationist

Last week, Secretary Vilsack announced the USDA NRCS is making funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners to participate in conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices. These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. Here in Vermont, NRCS is ready to work with producers who want to know more about how this funding can help their operation. Please visit [Farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) or stop by one of our USDA Service Centers for more information. See you soon!



A Message from John Roberts, Vermont FSA State Executive Director



Despite a relatively warm winter, we are once again digging out of about eight inches of snow here in Cornwall. Last week the sap was flowing quite well throughout the state - this week, not so much.

At this time, as much as I enjoy winter, I have begun to want it to be over and for things to start growing again. At least the days are getting longer now! However, before things really get going and the real rush begins now is the time to finish planning for the 2023 farming season. If you plant crops, what are you going to plant? If you graze livestock, what can you do better? It goes on and on, but it is time well spent, figuring out a plan, trying new things, and being flexible.

I hope you're all familiar with your local County FSA office and the staff there. If you aren't, go to <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=vt&agency=fsa>, look up your county office and go introduce yourself. I am sure that they have a program that might be of interest to you.

Our staff have been doing a lot of training recently for the new Emergency Relief Program, Phase 2 (ERP2) and for the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP). These programs are designed to fill in gaps left by previous programs, in revenue relief.

Our staff is also finishing up the paperwork for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), to assist farmers for damages to crops caused by the winter storm Elliott back around Christmas time. The storm caused extensive damage to maple sugaring operations, particularly in the northwest part of the state.

We are awaiting details on the Organic Dairy Market Assistance Program which has been announced but the application is not ready yet. As soon as we have the details, we will be reaching out to organic dairies to spread the word.

I hope things are going well for you all and please do not hesitate to reach out to me, John.Roberts2@usda.gov, or any of our FSA staff.

Farmers Can Now Make 2023 Crop Year Elections, Enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs

Agricultural producers can now change election and enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage](#) programs for the 2023 crop year, two key safety net programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Signup began Oct. 17, 2022, and producers have until March 15, 2023, to enroll in these two programs.

Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started issuing payments totaling more than \$255 million to producers with 2021 crops that have triggered payments through ARC or PLC.



2023 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2023 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2023, they must sign a new contract.

If producers do not submit their election by the March 15, 2023 deadline, their election remains the same as their 2022 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Web-Based Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to obtain basic information regarding the decision and factors that should be taken into consideration such as future commodity prices and historic yields to estimate payments for 2022.

2021 Payments and Contracts

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. This month, FSA processed payments to producers enrolled in 2021 ARC-CO, ARC-IC and PLC for covered commodities that triggered for the crop year.

For ARC-CO, producers can view the [2021 ARC-CO Benchmark Yields and Revenues](#) online database, for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For PLC, payments have triggered for rapeseed and peanuts.

For ARC-IC, producers should contact their local FSA office for additional information pertaining to 2021 payment information, which relies on producer-specific yields for the crop and farm to determine benchmark yields and actual year yields when calculating revenues.

By the Numbers

In 2021, producers signed nearly 1.8 million ARC or PLC contracts, and 251 million out of 273 million base acres were enrolled in the programs. For the 2022 crop year signed contracts surpassed 1.8 million, to be paid in the fall of 2023, if a payment triggers.

Since ARC and PLC were first authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, these safety-net programs have paid out more than \$34.9 billion to producers of covered commodities.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Microloans Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property



Farmers can use USDA farm ownership microloans to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013.

Microloans can also help with farmland and building purchases and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

To learn more about the FSA microloan program, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

NRCS Unveiled New Website in 2022

NRCS unveiled a new website last year, which was designed for you, whether you're a farmer, rancher or forest landowner who uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs or one of our partners who helps us deliver on the conservation mission.



The new NRCS site has been designed to support and enhance our mission by delivering relevant, timely, customer-focused information in an easy-to-navigate platform.

Key features include:

- It's been designed using the U.S. Web Design System, so you'll see a certain "family resemblance" among USDA and other federal websites, including farmers.gov.
- It's accessible (or 508 conformant), meaning the site is designed for use by people with disabilities.
- It's mobile responsive, meaning that it should work on a phone or tablet as easily as on a desktop computer.

Be sure to check out our: · [Guides and Instructions](#) - Search by resource type, NRCS program, natural resource concern, and state. · [Getting Assistance](#) - Learn more about available technical and financial assistance and how you can get support online as well as with the NRCS at your local Service Center. · [Conservation by State](#) - Find information on NRCS programs, services and other information in your state.

If you can't find something that you used to find on our website, contact us and we can help.

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.



There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.



Vermont USDA

356 Mountain View Drive
Colchester, VT 05446

Farm Service Agency

John Roberts, State Executive Director
802-658-2803
john.roberts2@usda.gov

Addison County Office

Christine Lary, Acting County Executive Dir.
802-771-3027
christine.lary@usda.gov

Rebecca Davis, Farm Loan Manager
603-223-6003
rebecca.davis2@usda.gov

Caledonia/Essex County Office

Patricia Matte, County Executive Director
802-424-3146
patricia.matte@usda.gov

Chittenden/Washington County Office

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist
802-522-9943
travis.thomason@usda.gov

Central Zone

Marybeth Whitten, District Conservationist
802-771-3038
marybeth.whitten@usda.gov

Northeast Zone

Dave Blodgett, District Conservationist
802-624-7013
david.blodgett@usda.gov

Northwest Zone

Lawrence Parker, County Executive Director
802-288-8155, ext. 102
lawrence.parker@usda.gov

Sarah Larose, District Conservationist
802-503-9202
sarah.larose@usda.gov

Lamoille/Orleans County Office

Heather Mateja, County Executive Director
Orleans: 802-334-6090, ext. 7016
Lamoille: 802-888-4935, ext. 3002 (Tues.)
heather.mateja@usda.gov

Angela Goodridge, Farm Loan Manager
802-334-6090, ext. 7003
angela.goodridge@usda.gov

South Zone

Phylicia J. Moore, District Conservationist
802-774-8034
phylicia.moore@usda.gov

Franklin/Grand Isle County Office

Laurie Locke, County Executive Director
802-528-4162
laurie.locke@usda.gov

Ryan Howrigan, District Director
802-528-4160
ryan.howrigan@usda.gov

Rutland/Bennington County Office

Christine Lary, Acting County Executive Dir.
802-775-8034, ext. 111
christine.lary@usda.gov

Windsor/Orange County Office

Christine Lary, County Executive Director
802-295-7942, ext. 3168
christine.lary@usda.gov

Windham County Office

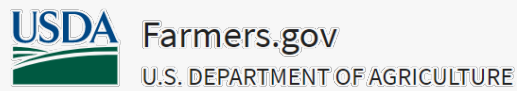
Christine Lary, County Executive Director
802-254-9766, ext. 3032
christine.lary@usda.gov

CONTACT US:

Farm Service Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Risk Management Agency
Service Center Locator



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