

In This Issue:

- [Note from the State Executive Director](#)
- [FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections](#)
- [Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage](#)
- [Discrimination Financial Assistance Program](#)
- [Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses](#)
- [Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations](#)

Note from the State Executive Director

We are deep into fall now. The colors on the trees are rapidly changing, creating a beautiful landscape across the state. However, you may have noticed that the colors have not been as vibrant this year, which is due to the above average precipitation this summer.

At the time of writing over 70% of the corn crop in Vermont has been harvested. The last few weeks of warm and dry weather have enabled many to catch-up in the amount of hay and silage that have been put up for winter. Forage testing will determine the true value of the crops.

There are roughly two months to go before the December 15th moratorium on manure spreading goes into effect, so this task should be a high priority for livestock farmers, especially as the rainy summer prevented spreading then.

FSA is hard at work with the recovery phase of the flooding disaster. Our county office staff are reaching back out to producers who reported damage and losses and are making sure that the appropriate programs are offered to help alleviate the costs of recovery. This may seem a daunting task, but our staff are happy to assist producers over the application hurdles. All producers should feel comfortable contacting their county office and exploring what may be available to them.

Through this calamitous event, it has become clear to me that we need to increase participation in crop insurance so that all Vermont farmers are protected against future disasters. We will analyze our successes and failures in the wake of this disaster and use that experience to make improvements to our systems down the road. There is no doubt that we have programs that will effectively help many in this sort of disaster if they are



properly utilized. I encourage all producers to reach out to their county offices and explore what programs they may be eligible for.

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections



The 2023 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 6, 2023, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 4, 2023.

County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive, indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must:

- Be of legal voting age or, if not of legal voting age, supervise and conduct the farming operation of an entire farm.
- Have an interest in a farm or ranch as either:
 - An individual who meets one or more of the following:
 - Is eligible and capable to vote in one's own right.
 - Is a partner of a general partnership.
 - Is a member of a joint venture.
 - Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information to FSA about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received program benefits.

Eligible voters in Local Administrative Area (Insert Number), who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local FSA county office. Customers can identify which LAA they or their farming operation is in by using our new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2024.

The candidates in this year's election are:

Addison County

Melanie Harrison is nominated in LAA 2, Addison County, to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Melanie shares "I have been dairy farming in Addison since 2008 (15yrs) and currently milk 190 Jerseys. I grow hay and pasture on our 450 acre farm, as well as board horses and teach riding lessons. I am an active 4-H

leader and serve on the Dairy Executive Committee of Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative.”

Bennington County

Michael Darling is nominated in LAA 5 in Bennington County to serve as a COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. Mike resides in Pownal, VT. He has produced crops and livestock for over 35 years.

Caledonia County

William H Pearl is nominated in LAA3 in Caledonia County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. William grew up on a Jersey farm in Barnet, VT. He is the third generation of Pearls to farm at this location. He took over ownership in 1994. He milked 75 head of Jerseys on a 450-acre farm, 150 acres of which were tillable. The milk cows were sold in 2019. He now crops 100 acres, raises about 30 – 40 replacement dairy heifers for another farmer, and raises about 20 head of beef. He taps 1,300 maple trees and produces 350 gallons of maple syrup each year.

Chittenden County

Ashley Farr is nominated in LAA 3 in Chittenden County to serve as a COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. Ashley resides in Richmond, VT. Previously a dairy farmer. Ashley now grows small grains and vegetables and raises hogs and chickens.

Essex County

Ursula S Johnson is nominated in LAA 4 in Essex County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Ursula resides in Canaan, VT. For several decades she and her husband Bill owned and operated a dairy farm and raised hay and corn for their livestock. They now own cropland and woodland in Canaan. Ursula has been involved with USDA for many years. She has been a County Executive Director, the Chair of the State Committee, and has been a County Committee member. Ursula is currently on the Board of Supervisors for the Essex County Natural Resources Conservation District and acts as Treasurer for that Organization.

Franklin County

Kurt Magnan is nominated in LAA 1, Franklin County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Kurt resides in Fairfax, VT and has produced dairy, hay & corn.

Geoffrey Sweeney is nominated in LAA 1, Franklin County, to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Geoffrey resides in St. Albans, VT and has produced dairy, hay & corn.

Wayne Fiske is nominated in LAA 2, Franklin County, to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Wayne resides in Highgate Center, VT and has produced dairy, beef, hay & corn.

Lamoille County

Ryan Percy is nominated in LAA 3, Lamoille, to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Ryan has been a dairy farmer with his father since birth and is taking over the operation.

Orange County

Sarah Putnam has been nominated in LAA 4 in Orange County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning January 1, 2024. Sarah is the current Vice-Chair of the Windsor-Orange County Committee. She began serving on the Committee in 2018. Sarah and her family operate a dairy farm located in Newbury. Sarah is willing to serve if reelected.

Orleans County

Amanda Taylor is nominated in LAA 1 in Orleans County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. She has been an organic dairy farmer with her husband for many years.

Rutland County

Wyatt Davenport is nominated in LAA 3 in Rutland County to serve as a COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. Wyatt Davenport lives in Wallingford, Vermont. He is a fourth-generation farmer on his family's farm where they raise replacement dairy heifers, custom crop, and sell hay. Wyatt also manages a large sugarbush in Cuttingsville, VT. He is the owner of Davenport Farm Management, LLC. Wyatt graduated from Vermont Technical College in 2016 with an associate degree in Dairy Farm Management and in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in diversified agriculture.

Washington County

Elwin Neill Jr. is nominated in LAA 4 in Washington County to serve as a COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. Elwin resides in Waitsfield, VT. Prior to selling his cows, Elwin was a long-time dairy farmer. Currently he grows forages, sweet corn, pumpkins, and raises beef and hogs.

Windham County

Jake Hamilton is nominated in LAA 2 in Windham County to serve as a COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. Jake is the current Chair of the Windham County Committee. He began his service on the Committee in 2018. Jake and his family operate a dairy farm located in West Brattleboro.

Windsor County

Brian Jasinski is nominated in LAA 3 in Windsor County to serve as COC member for a 3-year term beginning on January 1, 2024. He is the proprietor of Brian's Vermont Apiaries and currently maintains hives for honey production in 11 locations in Windsor County.

Change to Policy on Filing a Notice of Loss for Grazed Forage Producers with NAP Coverage

For the 2023 crop year, NAP forage producers with the intended use of grazing who elect to use independent assessments or other approved alternative loss percentage methods to establish their loss are no longer required to file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss with FSA. However, a CCC-576 Application for Payment form must be submitted to FSA no later than 60 calendar days after the coverage period ends. If an independent assessment is used to determine the loss, producers have 180 days to file an application for payment.

Producers that elect to have the grazing loss determined using similar mechanically harvested units still must timely file a CCC-576 Notice of Loss within 15 days of the disaster event or damage to the crop first becomes apparent or within 15 days of harvest.

Discrimination Financial Assistance Program



On July 7, USDA and its partner vendors announced the opening of the application period for Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which directs USDA to provide financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. The opening of the application process is an important step in delivering on USDA's commitment of providing financial assistance to those who have faced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs. The application process is open now and will close on January 13, 2024. Borrowers will have the option to apply for assistance online via 22007apply.gov or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at 22007apply.gov. The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program. Applicants can also call the free call center at 1-800-721-0970 or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available. It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021, and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the January 13, 2024, deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. The official application process and filling out an application is **free** and does not require a lawyer.

For more information, please visit 22007apply.gov. If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, there's a button there to subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2023 livestock losses, you must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. You then must provide the following supporting documentation to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of grower's contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 250 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application for payment by March 1, 2024.

For more information, contact your USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Dairy Margin Coverage Program Provides Critical Support for Dairy Operations

The August milk margin triggered the eighth consecutive payment for dairy producers who obtained [Dairy Margin Coverage](#) (DMC) for the 2023 program year. August's income over feed margin is \$6.46 per hundredweight (cwt.) with projected DMC payments totaling \$120 million. To date, including the projected August payments, dairy producers have received more than \$1.2 billion in much needed economic support for 2023 and margin forecasts indicate the likelihood of more to come before the end of the calendar year.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program administered by USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) that offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the

all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

Additional Dairy Assistance DMC complements other assistance available to dairy producers, including the [Milk Loss Program](#) (MLP) and the [Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program](#) (ODMAP). MLP covers milk that was dumped or removed, without compensation, from the commercial milk market due to qualifying weather events and the consequences of those weather events that inhibited delivery or storage of milk (e.g., power outages, impassable roads, infrastructure losses, etc.) during calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

USDA recently announced a second round of payments for dairy producers through ODMAP, providing an additional \$5 million to help dairy producers with marketing costs to mitigate market volatility, higher input and transportation costs and unstable feed supply and prices that have created unique hardships in the organic dairy industry. FSA has already paid out \$15 million in the first round of payments for eligible producers, bringing total ODMAP payments to \$20 million.

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).