



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Virginia August Newsletter Articles and Updates - November 2021

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FSA Acting State Director Message

Remember to Thank a Farmer This Thanksgiving

I want to start this month's message by wishing you, our FSA farmer and rancher customers, a Happy Thanksgiving! We are thankful for all you do each and every day to provide the food that we will enjoy during this upcoming season of celebration. Please be aware that the Farm Service Agency offices will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday.

I will say that I am thankful for the Virginia FSA Team that has continued to work hard to provide exceptional service to our customers through many challenges encountered.

While the holidays are a time of celebration and relaxation with family, I encourage you to keep several important upcoming deadlines in mind:

- November 15th is the acreage reporting deadline for 2022 apiculture
- November 22nd is the NAP Application for Coverage closing date for all 2022, Strawberry, Tree, Bush and Vine Crops, Apples and Blueberries.
- December 1st is the NAP Application for Coverage closing date for 2022 honey and maple sap.
- Eligible COC voters in Local Administrative Areas that have a seat up for election should have already received their ballot in the mail. Please return those voted ballots by mail or in the office by close of business on Dec. 6, 2021. COC elections are important because those elected serve as the voice of local producers at FSA county offices across the state. This is your chance to be heard. Please vote!

We are thankful for the farmers working hard year-round to produce the food on our tables. Whether they are producing fruits and vegetables, growing grain crops, or feeding livestock, our agricultural producers work together to feed the world—what a truly amazing feat! This year, while sitting around the table and discussing what you are thankful for with family and friends, don't forget to thank our American farmers and ranchers.

NRCS State Conservationist's Message

Although we can tend to think of “agriculture” as synonymous with amber waves of grain and wide-open spaces, the fastest-growing segment of American agriculture – and the one with the most potential for future growth – is in urban areas.

What's new with urban ag in Virginia? Plenty.

Our Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship (CSP) programs offer financial assistance for all scales of operations and NRCS is now offering payment schedules specifically designed for urban growers. This assistance includes funding for mulching, smaller-sized high tunnels and cover crops on tracts of less than one acre.

Virginia is also the site of two projects funded through the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production that focus on composting food waste now being buried in landfills. Prince William County is in the second year of a two-year pilot project to collect uneaten cafeteria food at six schools for composting at the county's recycling center. The city of Richmond just received aid to establish a network of food scraps drop-off locations in collaboration with community gardens, libraries, businesses and neighborhood groups.

Last month, we happily participated in Virginia State University's Mid-Atlantic Urban Ag Summit to open a dialogue on available USDA programs and services and our Quinton field office continues to actively work with urban ag liaisons from sister agencies and

FSA's Urban Ag County Committee to make connections with these growers. Quinton is strategically placed for these efforts due to its service area, which includes the cities of Richmond, Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg and many of their suburbs.

We're planning as well as acting. Virginia NRCS is establishing an urban ag working group to ensure that we address the needs of urban producers and you can count on hearing much more from this increasingly important segment of agriculture in the commonwealth.

Speaking of acting, we all know that extreme weather is a hazard to crops and communities. Read our article below to learn more about how NRCS is helping the Buchanan County town of Hurley recover from a severe flooding event.

Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez, State Conservationist

Streamlining How You Find Information on Farmers.gov

If you've been to farmers.gov before, things may look a little different from the last time you were here. We've made some changes, to improve how you find information so that you can find what you need even more easily and efficiently.

The big, green navigation bar near the top of every page – it's different now. It opens up, to show descriptions and subtopics, making it quicker and easier to figure out what's where and reduce guessing. Why? Two reasons: First, farmers.gov has grown a lot over the years and the old navigation wasn't designed for the load. Second, because you asked for it. We analyzed your comments through the "Feedback" button on the site and tested our new designs and information organization with real farmers and ranchers through surveys and live testing sessions.

Along with the new website navigation, we restructured how our pages and topics are grouped and organized to help you easily access the information you need. We also relabeled some of our existing pages using more direct language. This means that pages or information you've used before may have different labels or be in new places.

Important changes:

- The old Fund page is now called Loans. The Loans page has information and resources about USDA loans, including the Farm Loan Programs.
- The Recover page is now Protection and Recovery. This page has information to help you prepare and recover from natural disasters, and to mitigate risk for your operation.
- The Conserve page is now Conservation. This page hasn't changed much and still has information on how to implement conservation practices, improve and preserve natural resources, and address conservation concerns.

- The Manage page is now Working With Us. This page connects you with resources that tell you how USDA can help you start, expand, enhance, or improve your agricultural operation.
- The Connect page has been replaced with Your Business, a guide to USDA resources that cater to your specific operation. Information that was on the Connect page has been moved to the Contact Us page and the Get Involved page.

We are always updating farmers.gov based on your feedback and to stay up-to-date with important USDA announcements. We've recently created some new webpages, and updated some existing ones, to better equip you with the vital information you need. There are even more new pages coming soon, so stay tuned!

For farmers.gov, we don't guess what farmers and ranchers want from a website. We start by asking, then test our designs with volunteers who are also farmers and ranchers.

There's a feedback button on every page of farmers.gov. Based on your feedback, we looked for ways to make our site easier to use and to build the information that you're looking for. Live user testing sessions provide data, such as this heatmap, showing where testers tended to click during an exercise.

You helped us create the new navigation design, the new information organization, and told us how to speak using your words, and not legalese.

Check out farmers.gov today!

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain Results in Financial Penalties

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and your name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

Malted Grains and Maple Syrup Eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans

Malted small grains and maple syrup are now eligible for Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL) through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

FSFLs provide low-interest financing to help you build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

Eligible malted small grains include barley, oats, rice, rye and wheat. Maple sap is used to produce maple syrup.

The low-interest funds can be used for:

- bottler or filling systems for maple syrup, excluding containers
- equipment to improve, maintain, or monitor the quality of stored FSFL commodities, such as cleaners, moisture testers, heat detectors, along with a proposed storage facility
- handling and drying equipment determined by the County Committee to be needed and essential to the proper functioning of a storage system
- electrical equipment, such as pumps, lighting, motors, and wiring, integral to the proper operation of the storage and handling equipment, excluding installing electric service to the electrical meter.

FSFLs are not available for the actual processing of the small grain into the malted commodity or maple sap into maple syrup. Additionally, purchased commodities are not eligible for FSFLs.

The following storage and handling equipment is ineligible for FSFLs:

- boiling equipment
- feed handling and processing equipment
- production and feed facilities

- structures of a temporary nature not having a useful life of the term of the loan
- maple sap tubing and pumping systems.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

You do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

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, visit fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks

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. 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.

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.

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

Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

NAP Service Fees

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.

NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, *“Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification.”*

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, visit fsa.usda.gov/nap.

USDA Reminds Virginia Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Virginia who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting should make an appointment with their Farm Service Agency (FSA) office before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Virginia:

November 15, 2021 Apiculture

November 30, 2021 Clams

January 15, 2022 Apples, Peaches, Fall-Seeded Small Grains, Canola, Grapes

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your local FSA office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors. Contact your Service Center to set up an in-person or phone appointment.

To file a crop acreage report, you will need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

More Information

For questions, please contact your local FSA office. To locate your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

The Importance of Responding to NASS Surveys

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture.

If you receive a survey questionnaire, please respond quickly and online if possible.

The results of the surveys help determine the structure of USDA farm programs, such as soil rental rates for the Conservation Reserve Program and prices and yields used for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. This county-level data is critical for USDA farm payment determinations. Survey responses also help associations, businesses and policymakers advocate for their industry and help educate others on the importance of agriculture.

NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents and publishes only aggregate data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified.

NASS data is available online at nass.usda.gov/Publications and through the searchable [Quick Stats database](#). Watch a video on how NASS data is used at youtube.com/watch?v=m-4zjnh26io&feature=youtu.be.

Restoring Buchanan County Waterways through EWP

One of the Natural Resource Conservation Service's lesser-known programs could soon be making a difference in the lives of numerous residents of Buchanan County, where a day of heavy rain on August 30, 2021, produced flooding in and around the town of Hurley that destroyed 34 homes and damaged 15 others. The storms left motor vehicles and large sections of houses, buildings and other debris in Guesses Fork, Race Fork and Pawpaw Creek, three of the waterways most impacted by the flood.

While not a "first responder" agency, NRCS moved quickly to assess the area's eligibility for the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, which allows NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance to help communities restore damaged waterways to stable hydrologic function following natural disasters.

Staff members from the NRCS' Lebanon field office met with a potential sponsor as early as Sept. 2 to share qualification guidelines for sponsors and details on the application process. Follow-up meetings involving representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Virginia's Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) were held on Sept. 21 and Sept. 22 and teams have been on site making assessments to facilitate those efforts.

EWP is not a direct assistance program but requires that NRCS work with subdivisions of state governments, state agencies and/or tribal organizations or other eligible entities. A formal request for aid must come from one of these sponsors to activate the provisions of EWP. Learn more about EWP at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/>.

FSA Implements Set-Aside Loan Provision for Customers Impacted by COVID-19

Set-Aside Delays Loan Payments for Borrowers

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will broaden the use of the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) loan provision, normally used in the wake of natural disasters, to allow farmers with USDA farm loans who are affected by COVID-19, and are determined eligible, to have their next payment set aside. In some cases, FSA may also set aside a second payment for farmers who have already had one payment set aside because of a prior designated disaster.

FSA direct loan borrowers will receive a letter with the details of the expanded Disaster Set-Aside authorities, which includes the possible set-aside of annual operating loans, as well as explanations of the additional loan servicing options that are available. To discuss or request a loan payment Set-Aside, borrowers should call or email the farm loan staff at their local FSA county office.

The set-aside payment's due date is moved to the final maturity date of the loan or extended up to twelve months in the case of an annual operating loan. Any principal set-aside will continue to accrue interest until it is repaid. This aims to improve the borrower's cashflow in the current production cycle.

FSA previously announced it was relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. Direct loan applicants and borrowers are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to discuss loan making and servicing flexibilities and other needs or concerns. Customers participating in FSA's guaranteed loan programs are encouraged to contact their lender. Information on these flexibilities, and office contact information, can be found on farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FSA will be accepting most forms and applications by facsimile or electronic signature. Some services are also available online to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and certain program applications and payments. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
 - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Selected Interest Rates for November 2021

90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.75%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	2.875%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	2.75%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (7 years)	1.375%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125%

Dates to Remember

10/18 2022 ARC/PLC Crop Year Election/Enrollment Began

11/15 Acreage Reporting Date for Apiculture

11/20 2022 NAP Sales Closing Date for fruit/nut tree, bushes and vines, and strawberries

11/30 Acreage Reporting Date for Clams

12/1 2022 NAP Sales Closing Date for honey and maple sap

1/15 Acreage Reporting Date for apples, peaches, fall-seeded small grains, canola and grapes

3/15 2022 ARC/PLC Crop Year Election/Enrollment Ends



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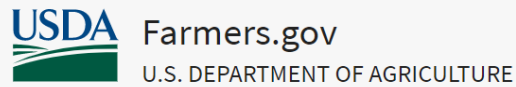
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