



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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

Virginia September Newsletter Articles and Updates - September 2024

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State Executive Director Message

New to Farming? USDA Can Help

If you're a new farmer or rancher, can help you get started or grow your operation through a variety of programs and services, from farm loans to crop insurance, and conservation programs to disaster assistance. We offer dedicated help to beginning farmers and ranchers. USDA considers anyone who has operated a farm or ranch for less than ten years to be a beginning farmer or rancher.

The first step is to find your local USDA Service Center by visiting farmers.gov/service-center-locator. Call your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to make an appointment to establish a farm number. You can establish a farm number for any land being used for agricultural purposes that is over 0.01 acre.

You'll need to bring the following to your appointment:

- Proof of identify (driver's license, social security card, IRS Employer Identification Number (EIN))
- Proof of Ownership (copy of recorded deed or recorded land contract)
- Lease agreements
- Entity Identification Status (articles of incorporation, trust and estate documents, or partnership agreement)

FSA staff will work with you one-on-one to review your documents and register your farm with FSA. Registering your farm allows you to apply for FSA and other USDA programs.

After your farm is registered, you can meet with FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to discuss your business and conservation goals. FSA and NRCS staff can help you determine program eligibility and walk you through the application process.

Depending on your operation, you may want to consider crop insurance. The USDA's Risk Management Agency provides crop insurance to help you manage risks on your farm. There are [many types of insurance products available](#) for a wide variety of production practices, including organic and sustainable agriculture.

More Information

- [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
- Urban grower? Learn about our [Urban Service Centers](#)
- New to farming?
- [Contact your Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator](#)

- [Factsheet for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
- Need a translator? Learn more about free, real-time [Translation Services](#)
- Our [Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#) has a worksheet to help you prepare for your first visit.

Dr. Ronald M. Howell Jr., State Executive Director

NRCS State Conservationist's Message

I'm always happy when a producer tells me that the NRCS employees at their local field office are consistently up to date with developments in ag technology and always seem to have data and facts to support any recommendations they might make.

What some farmers don't realize, however, is that much of this material is available to the general public on NRCS' national website. Field Office Technical Guides for Virginia – and all other states – are available at <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>. These technical guides used in each field office around the nation are localized to apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. To reach Virginia's guide, just enter "Virginia" in the select-a-state menu.

The guides are packed with data and cost estimates on participating in NRCS programs, links to our major conservation partners, results of soil surveys, specifications on NRCS conservation practices, data on the effectiveness of those practices and large amounts of related information. If you have an interest in the science and technology that's driving conservation and agriculture today, I recommend giving the Guide an exploratory look. You'll be surprised on how much there is to see.

Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez, NRCS Virginia State Conservationist

RD State Director Message

The cool mornings of September offer a welcome respite from the heat of summer as many of us look forward to fall harvest celebrations. As families come out in force to carry home that "perfect pumpkin," few will be thinking about the costs farmers incur to produce the foods that make the season so special.

I don't have to tell you that fertilizer costs more than doubled between 2021 and 2022 with lack of competition in the industry identified as a significant contributing factor. USDA created the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (FPEP) to help address this challenge and has invested \$286.6 million to date to strengthen supply chains and generate new economic opportunities for businesses.

Last month, we announced \$35 million in funding for additional projects that will benefit farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers in California, Iowa, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The nearly \$12 million grant awarded to AdvanSix Inc. will bring some big changes to the Hopewell facility that currently provides granular ammonium sulfate to 31,400 agricultural producers on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

Planned upgrades will increase operational capacity by more than 195,000 tons per year, enabling the company to grow its client base to more than 36,000. That's a win for all of us because modern equipment and new technologies help businesses grow, raising revenues for rural communities and lowering costs for farmers.

Learn more about this program and other efforts to promote innovation and resiliency across food and agriculture by visiting www.rd.usda.gov/fpep or <https://www.farmers.gov/global-food-insecurity>.

Perry Hickman - State Director

Obtaining Payments Due to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer's date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

For FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325 to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the deceased participant, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

Making Farm Reconstitutions

When changes in farm ownership or operation take place, a farm *reconstitution* is necessary. The reconstitution — or recon — is the process of combining or dividing farms or tracts of land based on the farming operation.

To be effective for the current fiscal year, farm combinations and farm divisions must be requested by **August 1 of the fiscal year** for farms subject to the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. A reconstitution is considered to be requested when all of the required signatures are on FSA-155 and all other applicable documentation, such as proof of ownership, is submitted.

Total Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and non-ARC/PLC farms may be reconstituted at any time.

The following are the different methods used when doing a farm recon:

- **Estate Method** — the division of bases, allotments and quotas for a parent farm among heirs in settling an estate
- **Designation of Landowner Method** — may be used when (1) part of a farm is sold or ownership is transferred; (2) an entire farm is sold to two or more persons; (3) farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons; (4) part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred; (5) a tract is sold to two or more persons; or (6) tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons. In order to use this method, the land sold must have been owned for at least three years, or a waiver granted, and the buyer and seller must sign a Memorandum of Understanding
- **DCP Cropland Method** — the division of bases in the same proportion that the DCP cropland for each resulting tract relates to the DCP cropland on the parent tract

- **Default Method** — the division of bases for a parent farm with each tract maintaining the bases attributed to the tract level when the reconstitution is initiated in the system.

For questions on your farm reconstitution, contact your County USDA Service Center.

Marketing Assistance Loans and Loan Deficiency Payments for Wool, Mohair and Unshorn Pelts

Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) provide financing and marketing assistance for producers of many commodities, including graded and non-graded wool, mohair, and unshorn pelts. MALs and LDPs are available during shearing and provide interim financing to help you meet cash flow needs without having to sell commodities when market prices are low, enabling you to delay selling until more favorable marketing conditions emerge. LDPs are payments made to producers who, although eligible to obtain an MAL, agree to forgo the loan in return for a payment on the eligible commodity.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2024 MALs and LDPs for all eligible wool, mohair and unshorn pelts. These requests should be made on or before the final availability date of Jan. 31, 2025. USDA recently announced [2024 wool and mohair marketing assistance loan rates](#).

Eligibility

To be eligible for a wool or mohair MAL or LDP, producers must produce and shear eligible mohair and wool in the U.S. during the applicable crop year and must:

- comply with conservation and wetland protection requirements;
- report all cropland acreage on applicable farms where the eligible commodity is produced;
- have and retain beneficial interest in the commodity until the MAL is repaid or the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) takes title to the commodity, and;
- meet Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitations.

Unshorn pelts are eligible for LDPs only. In addition to the criteria above, producers of unshorn pelts must have sold the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter or slaughter the lambs for personal use. LDPs and marketing loan gains are not subject to payment limitation, including actively engaged in farming and cash rent tenant provisions.

In addition to producer eligibility, the loan commodity must have been produced and shorn from live animals by an eligible producer, be in storable condition, and meet specific CCC

minimum grade and quality standards. Producers are responsible for any loss in quantity or quality of the wool or mohair pledged as loan collateral.

To retain beneficial interest, the producer must have control and title of the wool, mohair, or unshorn pelt. If beneficial interest in the commodity is lost, the commodity loses eligibility for an MAL or LDP and remains ineligible even if the producer later regains beneficial interest. The producer must be able to make all decisions affecting the commodity including movement, sale, and the request for an MAL or LDP.

Producers may repay an MAL any time during the loan period at the lesser of the loan rate plus accrued interest and other charges or an alternative loan repayment rate, the national posted price, which is announced weekly. Visit the Farm Service Agency (FSA) website for [posted loan and LDP rates](#).

How to Apply

Producers can apply for an MAL by contacting their local FSA county office. To be considered for a LDP, **producers must first have the form CCC-633 EZ, Page 1, on file with FSA** prior to losing beneficial interest in the wool, mohair or unshorn pelt. **It is best to visit the county office and submit the CCC-633 Page 1 right before you shear.** This is completed one time per crop year and indicates your intention to receive LDP benefits.

To apply and learn more information, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport.

Is the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program Right for You?

Farmers and ranchers rely on crop insurance to protect themselves from disasters and unforeseen events, but not all crops are insurable through the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides producers another option to obtain coverage against disaster for these crops. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops impacted by natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevents crop planting.

Commercially produced crops and agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available are generally eligible for NAP. Eligible crops include those grown specifically

for food, fiber, livestock consumption, biofuel or biobased products, or value loss crops such as aquaculture, Christmas trees, ornamental nursery, and others. Contact your local FSA office to see which crops are eligible in your state and county.

Eligible causes of loss include drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricanes, earthquake and flood. These events must occur during the NAP policy coverage period, before or during harvest, and the disaster must directly affect the eligible crop. For guidance on causes of loss not listed, contact your local FSA county office.

Interested producers apply for NAP coverage using FSA form [CCC-471](#), “Application for Coverage,” and pay the applicable service fee at the FSA office where their farm records are maintained. These must be filed by the application closing date, which varies by crop. Contact your local FSA office to verify application closing dates and ensure coverage for eligible NAP crops.

At the time of application, each producer acknowledges they have received the [NAP Basic Provisions](#), which describes NAP requirements for coverage. NAP participants must report crop acreage shortly after planting and provide verifiable or reliable crop production records when required by FSA.

Producers are required to pay service fees which vary depending on the number of crops and number of counties your operation is located in. The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Premiums also apply when producers elect higher levels of coverage with a maximum premium of \$15,750 per person or legal entity.

A producer’s certification on Form CCC-860 *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* may serve as an application for basic NAP coverage for all eligible crops beginning with crop year 2022. These producers will have all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage waived, in addition to a 50 percent premium reduction if higher levels of coverage are elected.

For more detailed information on NAP, download the [NAP Fact Sheet](#). To get started with NAP, we recommend you contact your [local USDA service center](#).

USDA and FarmRaise Launch Additional Online Disaster Assistance Decision Tool for Livestock, Honey Bee and Farm-Raised Fish Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, in partnership with FarmRaise, today launched a new, online Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) Decision Tool. The USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) tool is designed to assist agricultural producers who have been impacted by natural disasters access available

program support. This ELAP Decision Tool, a component of a broader disaster assistance program educational module, further expands the library of online FSA disaster and farm loan program reference resources and decision aids currently available to agricultural producers on the FarmRaise [FSA educational hub](#). The Decision Tool is a resource only and is not an application for benefits or a determination of eligibility.

[ELAP](#) is designed to address losses not covered by other FSA disaster assistance programs. The program provides recovery assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honey bee, and farm-raised fish losses due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including drought, blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP covers grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres due to an eligible loss condition. ELAP also covers certain mortality losses, due to an eligible condition, for livestock including honey bees and farm-raised fish as well as honey bee hive losses.

New FarmRaise Tools and Resources

[FarmRaise](#), in partnership with FSA, recently launched their online, [educational hub](#) – the FarmRaise | FSA Educational Hub – comprised of videos, tools and interactive resources that enable USDA cooperators and agricultural producers to learn about and access major FSA programs.

A new addition to the hub, the ELAP Decision Tool helps eligible producers impacted by qualifying natural disasters and other eligible causes of loss better understand program eligibility and application requirements, learn about record-keeping and supporting loss documentation requirements and track the steps needed before applying for program benefits. The document generated by the ELAP Decision Tool can be used to support the ELAP application process, but it is not a program application. Producers will need to complete and submit the ELAP Application to their local FSA county office. Upon request, applicants may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation per the program requirements.

Through use of the ELAP Decision Tool, producers can segment by loss type (honey bee, farm-raised fish and livestock). This enables easier navigation, as guided by the tool, to assistance available to meet specific disaster recovery needs. After entering the type of loss, identifying the loss condition and entering their inventory and loss information, producers are guided through a worksheet that helps identify required loss documentation — documentation (i.e., pictures, receipts, truck logs, etc.) that can be uploaded through the ELAP tool and sent directly to the producer’s local FSA county office, or producers can provide a copy of the tool-generated worksheet summary document when they visit their local FSA county office to complete and submit the required ELAP application.

Additional FarmRaise Resources

The [previously announced](#) Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Decision Tool, also available through the FarmRaise | FSA Educational Hub, assists livestock producers who suffered losses from eligible adverse weather events and other causes of loss as well as cooperators who are helping disaster-impacted livestock producers navigate available federal disaster assistance programs. The LIP Decision Tool gives producers guidance on what is needed to gather and submit required loss documentation, reducing the amount of time needed to complete applications and enabling FSA county office staff to deliver much-needed assistance faster. Using the LIP Decision Tool is not an application for benefits or a determination of eligibility.

In addition to the new ELAP Decision Tool and the LIP Decision Tool, the FarmRaise | FSA Educational Hub offers several, easily navigated farm loan programs how-to videos designed to introduce producers to FSA's many farm loan programs options and guide them through the application process.

More FSA program resources and tools will continue to be added to the FarmRaise | FSA Educational Hub. Cooperators and agricultural producers are encouraged to visit the FarmRaise | FSA Educational Hub often to access all available educational resources.

Reminder: Insurance Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Through the Emergency Relief Program

Producers who received an Emergency Relief Program (ERP) payment need to meet ERP insurance linkage requirements by purchasing crop insurance, or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage where crop insurance is not available.

Purchase coverage must be at the 60/100 coverage level or higher for insured crops or at the catastrophic coverage level or higher for NAP crops for the next two available crop years, which will be determined from the date you received an ERP payment and may vary depending on the timing and availability of coverage. The insurance coverage requirement applies to the physical location of the county where the crop was located and for which an ERP payment was issued.

Contact your crop insurance agent or local FSA county office as soon as possible to ask about coverage options. Producers who do not obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will be required to refund the ERP benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest. To determine which crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP, visit the RMA website.

For more information, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

The following are FSA signature guideelines:

- Married individuals must sign their given name.
- Example—Mary Doe and John Doe are married. When signing FSA forms, each must use their given name, and may not sign with the name of their spouse. Mrs. Mary Doe may not sign documents as Mrs. John Doe. For Farm Loan Purposes, spouses may not sign on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory, a signature will be needed for each. For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent. There are certain exceptions where a minor's signature may be accepted without obtaining the signature of one of the parents. Despite minority status, a youth executing a promissory note for a Youth Loan will incur full personal liability for the debt and will sign individually.

Note: By signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, or other penalties, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

FAXED signatures will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

Examples of documents not approved for FAXED signatures include:

- Promissory note
- Assignment of payment
- Joint payment authorization
- Acknowledgement of commodity certificate purchase

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either spouse has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

USDA Launches Online Debt Consolidation Tool to Increase Farmer And Rancher Financial Viability

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing the launch of the Debt Consolidation Tool, an innovative online tool available through farmers.gov that allows agricultural producers to enter their farm operating debt and evaluate the potential savings that might be provided by obtaining a debt consolidation loan with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) or a local lender.

A debt consolidation loan is a new loan used to pay off other existing operating loans or lines of credit that might have unreasonable rates and terms. By combining multiple eligible debts into a single, larger loan, borrowers may obtain more favorable payment terms such as a lower interest rate or lower payments. Consolidating debt may also provide farmers and ranchers additional cash flow flexibilities.

The Debt Consolidation Tool is a significant addition to FSA's suite of improvements designed to modernize its Farm Loan Programs. The tool enhances customer service and increases opportunities for farmers and ranchers to achieve financial viability by helping them identify potential savings that could be reinvested in their farming and ranching operation, retirement accounts, or college savings accounts.

Producers can access the Debt Consolidation Tool by visiting farmers.gov/debt-consolidation-tool. The tool is built to run on modern browsers including Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. Producers do not need to create a farmers.gov account or access the authenticated customer portal to use the tool.

Additional Farm Loan Programs Improvements

FSA recently announced significant changes to Farm Loan Programs through the [Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule](#). These policy changes, to take

effect September 25, 2024, are designed to better assist borrowers to make strategic investments in the enhancement or expansion of their agricultural operations.

FSA also 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.
- A new [educational hub](#) with farm loan resources and videos.

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](#).

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announces 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.

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- 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.
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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

NRCS Announces Projects to be Funded

NRCS Virginia has announced that funds will be available for these projects in Fiscal Year 2025:

Increasing Landscape Resiliency in Virginia's Top Producing Agricultural Region: This project's focus is on conservation of the Shenandoah Valley's productive farms and forests, rural heritage and clean waters. Conservation groups working with Virginia NRCS will offer landowners direct compensation for entity-held and U.S.-held conservation easements on farms and forestland through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Properties must be located in Augusta, Rockingham, Page, Shenandoah, Warren or Frederick counties to be eligible. Interested participants are highly encouraged to connect with a representative from Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Valley Conservation Council or Potomac Conservancy before applying.

Upper Clinch-Powell Watershed Partnership: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will lead an initiative to support best management conservation practices on agricultural and forestry land in Lee, Scott and Russell counties to address field sediment, nutrient and pathogen losses and aquatic habitats in the Clinch and Powell watersheds.

Virginia Headwaters Restoration Initiative: Trout Unlimited will assist with in-stream habitat and water quality improvement practices in high-priority headwater streams of the upper James River, Shenandoah River and upper South Branch Potomac watersheds in sections of Virginia where native brook trout are present. Participants eligible to participate

in this project must be located within Highland, Bath, Rockbridge, Augusta, Rockingham or Shenandoah counties. Due to required practices and Virginia NRCS engineering guidance, applicants must work with Trout Unlimited prior to application submission to complete the appropriate project assessment for their property.

Oyster Bottom Restoration through Aquaculture: Focuses on restoring degraded oyster habitat in Virginia’s tidal tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay by implementing a cost-share partnership between NRCS, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Virginia oyster producers. Covered counties include Accomack, Northampton, Westmoreland, Northumberland, Richmond, Lancaster, King William, King and Queen, Middlesex, Mathews, Gloucester, New Kent, Henrico, Charles City, James City, Isle of Wight and York. The program will also be applicable in the cities of Richmond, Newport News, Hampton, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach.

Mid-Atlantic Dairy Farmers Producing Tangible Results Through Climate Smart Solutions: This initiative aims to enhance the sustainability of dairy farms in Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia through a comprehensive program of outreach, education and the implementation of climate-smart practices. This program will target agricultural best management practice implementation in Clarke, Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Orange, Madison, Page, Shenandoah, Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Cumberland, Floyd and Franklin counties in Virginia. The project seeks to achieve significant improvements in water quality, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced soil health and greater farm efficiency while empowering Mid-Atlantic dairy farmers who are members of Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association to lead in sustainable agriculture.

Preserving Working Farms and Securing Urban Ag: This project focuses on conservation of agricultural lands through entity-held conservation easements in Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, Chesterfield, New Kent and Charles City counties along with the city of Richmond. Conservation easements completed under this project will further the restoration, protection, enhancement, management, maintenance and monitoring of water quality on the protected property to address long-term protection of land, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, nutrient and pathogen losses and weather resilience.

Selected Interest Rates for September 2024

90-Day Treasury Bill	5.500%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	5.250%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	5.500%

Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.750%
Farm Storage Facility Loans - (7 years)	3.875%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	5.625%

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