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Disaster Assistance Availability through FSA

FSA can provide assistance to producer who have suffered losses endured from adverse weather events. This assistance can be provided through FSA's Emergency Loan Program or one of its many disaster programs such as Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), Livestock Forage Program (LFP), Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or the Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

All producers wishing to obtain federal assistance through FSA should contact their local FSA office as soon as possible as it is important to note that Notice of Losses (NOL) for programs such as ELAP, LIP, NAP, and TAP are required to be filed timely and may be filed by phone, email, or by appointment. NOL deadlines by program are as follows:

- ELAP – 15 days for honeybee losses and 30 days for all livestock losses
- LIP – 30 days for all livestock losses
- NAP – 15 days for all covered crops
- TAP – 90 days for tree losses

****Please note that some programs such as ECP, EFRP, Emergency Loans (EM), and TAP require that environmental reviews are complete prior to actions being taken that are associated with the application. It is critical that **no work begins** prior to receiving notice of approval from FSA on the required environmental review. Failure to allow the necessary**

environmental review to be complete prior to actions being taken, may result in disapproval of the application.

2023 OTECP and OCCSP Signups Open

Agricultural producers and handlers who are certified organic, along with producers and handlers who are transitioning to organic production, can apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program](#) (OTECP) and [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP), which help producers and handlers cover the cost of organic certification, along with other related expenses. **The 2023 OTECP and OCCSP signup period is open until October 31, 2023.**

Cost Share for 2023

OTECP covers:

- Certification costs for organic producers and handlers (25% up to \$250 per category).
- Eligible expenses for transitional producers, including fees for pre-certification inspections and development of an organic system plan (75% up to \$750).
- Registration fees for educational events (75% up to \$200).
- Soil testing (75% up to \$100).

Meanwhile, OCCSP covers 50% or up to \$500 per category of certification costs in 2022. In the state of Washington, OCCSP can provide cost share under the following categories: crops, wild crops, livestock, and processing/handling.

Producers can receive cost share through both OTECP and OCCSP. Both OTECP and OCCSP cover costs incurred from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023. OCCSP provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible expenses for cost share reimbursement under OCCSP include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage. Itemized invoices documenting paid eligible expenses are required to be submitted as part of an acceptable application packet for OCCSP and may be requested for OTECP applications. Producers have until October 31, 2023 to file OTECP and OCCSP applications. FSA will process payments as completed application packets are received.

How to Apply

To apply for either OTECP or OCCSP, producers and handlers should contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at their local [county FSA office](#). As part of completing the OCCSP applications, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses. Organic producers and handlers may also apply for OCCSP through participating State agencies.

Producers and handlers certified organic by Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) may receive OCCSP cost share reimbursement funding through WSDA later in the year. If cost share is paid through WSDA, producers and handles are not eligible to receive duplicate OCCSP reimbursement from USDA-FSA. If a producer has an organic operation certified by WSDA and does not receive reimbursement through WSDA, the producer can apply for OCCSP through FSA. Additional documentation may be required to verify that a duplicate payment was not processed through WSDA. OTECP funding available is not available to state agencies like WSDA. All OTECP applications must be received and processed through FSA.

Additional details can be found on the [OTECP](#) and [OCCSP](#) webpages.

Report Damage or Loss of NAP Covered Crops Immediately

Weather can be unpredictable and harmful to crops. If weather events cause damage to or loss of your NAP covered crops, remember that you must report this to your local FSA county office timely in order to be eligible for a NAP benefit.

NAP notices of loss can be initiated by phone, email, or fax, but must be submitted in writing, to your local FSA county office for weather related events or adverse natural occurrences that cause damage to or loss of the NAP covered crop. To report crop damage or loss you must complete, sign, and file the loss portion of form CCC-576 with your FSA office by the earlier of either of the following:

- **15 calendar days** after the disaster occurrence or date of loss or damage to the crop or commodity first becomes apparent or
- **15 calendar days** after the normal harvest date.

Please note, producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA **within 72 hours** of when a loss becomes apparent.

FSA county offices can take initial NAP notice of loss notifications via phone, email, or fax. Offices will assist producers in completing the official CCC-576 Notice of Loss form as best as possible, sending the form to producers via email, fax, or mail for final review and signature. The completed and signed CCC-576 should then be returned to the county office as soon as possible via email, fax, or mail. **A CCC-576 is not considered filed until it has been signed and returned to FSA.**

As the 2023 crop year progresses, it is imperative that a notice of loss is filed (for all affected NAP covered crops) within the timeframe noted above for each weather-related event or adverse natural occurrence. This will ensure FSA is notified that your NAP covered crop or crops have been damaged or lost. If the loss event is approved, remember to provide your crop production to your local FSA county office within 60 days after harvest or request an appraisal within 60 days of the normal harvest date so that the payment portion of form CCC-576 can be filed timely.

When a covered crop is lost or damage is significant, replanting is required if feasible and the final planting date has not passed. **When you determine that a NAP covered crop**

will be destroyed, abandoned, or not taken to harvest as intended, you must report this to your local FSA office as soon as possible so a field visit can be conducted by a certified loss adjuster. Once the crop appraisal has been completed, the loss adjuster will release the field and you can destroy the covered crop acres and replant to a different crop or harvest the acres for a different use.

Remember, failure to timely notify your FSA county office of NAP covered crop damage or loss will result in denial of NAP payment benefits. Destroying NAP covered crop acres or harvesting for a different use without a loss adjuster appraisal will result in those acres being determined ineligible for NAP payment benefits.

If you have any questions about NAP policy requirements, contact your local [county FSA office](#) for more information.

Important ARC/PLC Deadlines

All changes to farming operations for FY 2023 that result in succession of interest ARC/PLC contracts **must be approved by September 29, 2023**. Changes that can result in succession of interest contracts include things such as a sale of land, changes to an operator or producer on the contract, or changes to shares that were originally approved on the contract. Please contact your local servicing office to make any necessary changes, failure to notify your local servicing office of changes to your operation may result in delay of payment or a determination of ineligibility for your contract.

Vacancy Announcements for Permanent FSA Positions in WA State

Whitman County - Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Colfax, WA is accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Program Technician position. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements will be posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov. The salary ranges from \$34,584 to \$60,703 per year. **Candidates may qualify for a 25% recruitment incentive for this position.**

Lincoln County - Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Davenport, WA is accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Program Technician position. Duties include carrying out office activities related to farm programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications, eligibility requirements will be posted on USA Jobs at www.usajobs.gov. The salary ranges from \$34,584 to \$60,703 per year.

Lewis County or Pierce County - Farm Loan Program Technician

The Farm Service Agency office located in Chehalis, WA and Puyallup, WA is accepting applications for a Full-Time Permanent Farm Loan Program Technician position. Duties

include carrying out office activities related to farm loan programs. The full vacancy announcement which includes qualifications and eligibility requirements are posted on at www.usajobs.gov. The salary ranges from \$41,925 to \$67,514 per year.

FSA Looking for Temporary Part-time or Fulltime Assistance in Spokane

Washington State Farm Service Agency (FSA) is hiring part-time, Temporary Program Technician (PT), positions in **Spokane County**. This is a great opportunity for students or those that can only commit to a part-time schedule but full-time schedules are available as well.

Duties include general office activities supporting FSA programs administered at the field level. Successful applicants must be reliable, have a professional attitude, enjoy working with the public. The hourly rate depends on education and experience.

If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please share this information with them. To apply please submit a copy of your resume to travis.martin@usda.gov. You may also direct questions by calling 509-323-3036.

Farm Service Agency Accepting Nominations for County Committees June 15 through August 1

The nomination period for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees runs June 15 through August 1, 2023, and elections will take place starting in November.

County committees are unique to FSA and serve as a direct link between agricultural communities across the country and USDA. For more information on FSA county committees, visit fsa.usda.gov/elections. You can also check this map to see the [Local Administrative Areas \(LAAs\)](#) that are up for election in 2023.

Important Dates and Deadlines

August 1, 2023 – County Committee election nominations due.

August 11, 2023 – Deadline to file Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) applications.

August 15, 2023 – Deadline for CRP Transition Incentive Program (TIP) offers to be submitted.

August 31, 2023 – Deadline to obtain 2024 crop year NAP coverage for cabbage (for seed or fresh); canola; carrots (for seed); cauliflower (for seed or fresh); onions (for seed, fresh, or processing); rapeseed; rutabaga (for seed or fresh); turnips (for seed or fresh);

and any other fall planted crops not mentioned in other closing dates (full list of Washington State NAP dates posted here).

September 12, 2023 – Deadline for eligibility forms to be filed for ERP and PARP.

September 29, 2023 – Deadline for CRP contract approvals.

September 29, 2023 – Deadline for late-filed and succession-in-interest ARCPLC contracts.

September 29, 2023 – Deadline for Shellfish Acreage Reporting.

October 31, 2023 – Deadline for Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) applications.

Washington State / FSA Office

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State Committee

Bernard "Butch" Ogden, Chair
Brett Blankenship, Member
Jackie Richter, Member
Jose Ramirez, Member
Sam Ledgerwood, Member

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632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).