

- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [USDA Releases Nationwide Farmer, Rancher and Forest Manager Prospective Customer Survey](#)
- [Farmers Can Now Make 2023 Crop Year Elections, Enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs](#)
- [Current FSA Loan Interest Rates](#)
- [Dairy Producers Can Now Enroll for 2023 Signup for Dairy Margin Coverage](#)
- [2022 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections Open This Week](#)
- [USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service](#)
- [2022 Soil Science Annual Data Refreshed](#)
- [USDA Awards Howard-Suamico School District with Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grant, Part of Broader \\$14.2 Million Investment](#)

Dates to Remember

November 11, 2022: USDA Service Centers closed in observance of Veterans Day.

November 15, 2022: [Acreage Reporting](#) Deadline for fall mint and fall-seeded small grains (for 2023 crop year).

November 20, 2022: [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) closing date for Apples, Aronia, Asparagus, Blueberries, Caneberries, Cherries, Cranberries, Currants, Grapes, Hops, Pears, Plums and Strawberries.

November 24, 2022: USDA Service Centers closed in observance of Thanksgiving.

December 5, 2022: Last day to return voted ballots to the USDA Service Center for [COC Elections](#).

December 9, 2022: Deadline for producers to sign up for [Dairy Margin Coverage \(DMC\)](#).

December 26, 2022: USDA Service Centers closed in observance of Christmas Day.

USDA Releases Nationwide Farmer, Rancher and Forest Manager Prospective Customer Survey

Are you a farmer, rancher or forest manager? Please share your vital feedback with USDA by taking a nationwide survey at farmers.gov/survey! The survey is completely anonymous, will take about 10 minutes to complete, is available in multiple languages, and will be open until March 31, 2023. The survey focuses on gathering feedback about the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency.

All farmers, ranchers and forest managers are encouraged to take the survey. USDA would especially like to hear from prospective customers: those who don't know about USDA or have yet to work with USDA, and those who were unable to participate in the past. The survey will help USDA enhance support, improve programs and services, increase access, and advance equity for new and existing customers.

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

Agricultural producers can now change election and enroll in the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage](#) programs for the 2023 crop year, two key safety net programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Producers have until March 15, 2023, to enroll in these two programs. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has started issuing payments totaling more than \$255 million to producers with 2021 crops that have triggered payments through ARC or PLC.

2023 Elections and Enrollment

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

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

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

Web-Based Decision Tools

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

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

2021 Payments and Contracts

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

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

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

By the Numbers

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

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

Crop Insurance Considerations

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

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

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers

on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

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

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

More Information

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

Current FSA Loan Interest Rates

Current loan rates as of November 1, 2022.

Farm Loan Interest Rates:

Farm Operating - Direct	4.375%
Farm Operating - Microloan	4.375%
Farm Ownership - Direct	4.500%
Farm Ownership - Microloan	4.500%
Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing	2.500%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment	1.500%
Emergency - Amount of Actual Loss	3.750%

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL):

3-year FSFL	4.250%
5-year FSFL	4.125%
7-year FSFL	4.000%
10-year FSFL	3.875%
12-year FSFL	3.875%

Please visit the [Farm Loan Program](#) webpage for more information.

Dairy Producers Can Now Enroll for 2023 Signup for Dairy Margin Coverage

Dairy producers can now enroll for 2023 coverage through the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program, an important safety net program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that helps producers manage changes in milk and feed prices. Last year, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) took steps to improve coverage, especially for small- and mid-sized dairies, including offering a new Supplemental DMC program and updating its feed cost formula to better address retroactive, current and future feed costs. These changes continue to support producers through this year's signup, which ends Dec. 9, 2022.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program 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.

So far in 2022, DMC payments to more than 17,000 dairy operations have triggered for August for more than \$47.9 million. According to DMC margin projections, an indemnity payment is projected for September as well. At \$0.15 per hundredweight for \$9.50 coverage, risk coverage through DMC is a relatively inexpensive investment.

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, aside from a \$100 administrative fee. Limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or a military veteran farmers or ranchers are exempt from paying the administrative fee, if requested. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the [online dairy decision tool](#).

Supplemental DMC

Last year, USDA introduced Supplemental DMC, which provided \$42.8 million in payments to better help small- and mid-sized dairy operations that had increased production over the years but were not able to enroll the additional production. Supplemental DMC is also available for 2023.

Supplemental DMC coverage is applicable to calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023. Eligible dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of established production history may enroll supplemental pounds.

For producers who enrolled in Supplemental DMC in 2022, the supplemental coverage will automatically be added to the 2023 DMC contract that previously established a supplemental production history.

Producers who did not enroll in Supplemental DMC in 2022 can do so now. Producers should complete their Supplemental DMC enrollment before enrolling in 2023 DMC. To enroll, producers will need to provide their 2019 actual milk marketings, which FSA uses to determine established production history.

DMC Payments

Additionally, FSA will continue to calculate DMC payments using updated feed and premium hay costs, making the program more reflective of actual dairy producer expenses. These updated feed calculations use 100% premium alfalfa hay rather than 50%. The benefits of these feed cost adjustments were realized in the recent August 2022

margin payment as current high feed and premium hay costs were considered in payment calculations.

More Information

In addition to DMC, USDA offers other risk management tools for dairy producers, including the [Dairy Revenue Protection \(DRP\)](#) plan that protects against a decline in milk revenue (yield and price) and the [Livestock Gross Margin \(LGM\)](#) plan, which provides protection against the loss of the market value of livestock minus the feed costs. Both DRP and LGM livestock insurance policies are offered through the Risk Management Agency. Producers should contact their local [crop insurance agent](#) for more information.

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

2022 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections Open This Week

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) began mailing ballots this week for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) [county and urban county committee elections](#) to all eligible agricultural producers and private landowners across the country. Elections are occurring in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these committee members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. Producers and landowners must return ballots to their local FSA county office or have their ballots be postmarked by Dec. 5, 2022, in order for those ballots to be counted.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation but may not have applied or received FSA program benefits. Additionally, producers who are not of legal voting age but supervise and conduct farming operations for an entire farm are eligible to vote in these elections.

Each committee has from three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms, and at least one seat representing an LAA is up for election each year. Ballots must be in the mail or delivered in person by close of business Dec. 5, 2022, to be counted. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2023.

Producers can find out if their LAA is up for election and if they are eligible to vote by contacting their local FSA county office. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail can request one from their local FSA county office. Visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](#) to find your local USDA Service Center and [fsa.usda.gov/elections](#) for more information.

USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

2022 Soil Science Annual Data Refreshed

Wisconsin farmers and forest landowners rely on one common resource for production of food, fuel, and fiber—their healthy soil. To help take care of the vital natural resource, many turn to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Web Soil Survey (WSS). USDA NRCS soil scientists update the official soils data annually, which is then published on WSS for public use. WSS has been refreshed as of October 1, 2022 and is available for Wisconsin customers to use.

WSS is the largest public-facing natural resource database in the world. Whether you are a farm entity that manages 10,000 acres or a private landowner of an acre of forest, you can use WSS to learn about your soils through customizable maps, properties, and interpretations. The National Cooperative Soil Survey Program and the WSS is an endeavor of the NRCS and other federal agencies, state and local governments and cooperators. It provides a systematic study of the soils in a given area, including the classification, mapping and interpretation of the soils. Soil types are classified from

physical properties, drawing heavily on the principles of pedology, geology and geomorphology.

The NRCS released WSS in 2005 to provide better public access to national soils data and mapping. It is an important tool meant to provide general information, such as soil type and basic properties, to more complex data and interpretations. The entire [Official Soils Database](#) is refreshed each year to ensure that updated official data and associated interpretations are available to the public. The annual refresh date was October 1, 2022.

Under the soil survey program mandate, NRCS is charged by congress to inventory the soils of the U.S., interpret the soils for various uses, publish info to the public and maintain inventory to meet user needs. NRCS soil scientists across the country continuously work to improve spatial data and put together a complete suite of soil interpretations and other products that customers want. Refreshed official soils information includes the results from soil projects for fiscal year 2022, as well as updated interpretation criteria for several national interpretations.

Customers can access the official USDA soils data by visiting the [Web Soil Survey \(WSS\)](#) or [Soil Data Access \(SDA\)](#). Users can use the WSS to create thematic maps, generate reports, create custom manuscripts and download soils data for area of interest or soil survey area. Users can use SDA to write custom soil data access queries against the tabular data or to connect to the soils database with web services.

The WSS serves about 300,000 users a month and over 3.5 million web service requests a month (122 million a year) through soil data access web services, attracting a large audience that includes conservation planners, landscape architects, community planners, real estate developers, engineers and university researchers.

The WSS is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for free. Visit the WSS and click on the *Download Soils Data* tab, then choose the State of interest. Individuals interested in soil related topics may subscribe to email updates through [GovDelivery](#). Individuals can also e-mail inquiries to SoilsHotline@usda.gov for assistance with the WSS. Questions about soil data in Wisconsin should be directed to the [Wisconsin State Soil Scientist](#). For more information on the WSS, visit the [Wisconsin NRCS Soils Webpage](#)

USDA Awards Howard-Suamico School District with Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grant, Part of Broader \$14.2 Million Investment

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$14.2 million in 52 grants that support urban agriculture and innovative production, including a project in Green Bay, Wisconsin. This investment, which includes American Rescue Plan Act funds, will enable grant recipients like the Howard-Suamico School District (HSSD), to increase food production and access in economically distressed communities, provide job training and

education, and allow partners to develop business plans and zoning proposals. These grants build on \$26.3 million in projects funded since 2020, and are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture through its Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP).

Howard-Suamico Goes Hydroponic, is a project that will improve the school's access to local, fresh, and nutritious food, while also teaching students about innovative agriculture production, using hydroponic technology.

Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants

The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) competitive grants program supports a wide range of activities through two types of grants, planning projects and implementation projects. Today's announced recipients include 18 planning projects and 34 implementation projects. The grant to HSSD is for a planning/ an implementation project.

The planning projects will initiate or expand efforts of urban and suburban farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders. These grantees will target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, urban forestry, and policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production. Having more capacity to gather, process, move and store food in different geographic areas of the country will provide more options for producers to create value-added products and sell locally, which will support new economic opportunities and job creation in underserved communities. Additional regional capacity also will give consumers more options to buy locally produced products—helping ensure food is available to consumers—and reduce the climate impact of our food supply chain.

The implementation projects will accelerate urban, indoor and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers and improve local food access. They may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, education and urban farming policy implementation.

In total, projects were funded in 27 states. For a complete list of grant recipients and project summaries, visit [Urban Agriculture | USDA](#).

More Information

OUAIP was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture and innovative production. These grants are part of a broader USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Creating and managing a Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production to advise the Secretary on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban agriculture.
- Renewing the [People's Garden Initiative](#), which celebrates collaborative gardens across the country and worldwide that benefit their communities by growing fresh, healthy food and supporting resilient, local food systems using sustainable practices, and providing greenspace.

- Providing cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing in risk management education to broaden reach of crop insurance among urban producers.
- Organizing 17 FSA urban county committees to make important decisions about how FSA farm programs are administered locally. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting.

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