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## From Brenda's Desk

Happy National Ag Day and Ag Week from the staff at the Big Horn County Service Center. With spring coming I was wanting to remind you of upcoming deadline:



- For crops not covered by crop insurance; we have the non-insured crop disaster assistance program (NAP). In Big Horn County the signup for small grain hay, grass seed, soybean and all other eligible spring-seeded crops is **April 1, 2023**.
- We have two new programs to assist with losses due to natural disasters or the pandemic: Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP). For more information on these programs please visit farmer.gov or contact this office. Signup deadline is **June 2, 2023**

The weather sure has been unpredictable so far this year, with the snowstorms and now the spring melt other programs may become available. If you experience severe loss to off stream headgates, washed out pipelines, excessive debris on your fields, etc, from the ice jams or flooding please contact this office as soon as possible so we can evaluate the damage. These kinds of events could make available the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to help restore damaged caused by the flooding.

If you have lost any livestock due to natural disasters or extreme weather; please contact us within 30 days of the event or when loss is apparent to start your Notice of Loss. We may be able to help cover some of your losses after normal mortality is met.

### Upcoming Deadlines/Dates:

Mar. 21- Mar. 27- National Agriculture Week

April 7- General CRP Signup Deadline

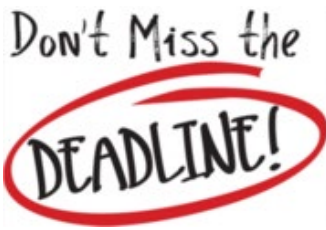
May 29- Office Closed- Memorial Day

June 2- Signup Deadline for ERP Phase 2 and PARP

July 15- Acreage Reporting Deadline- Spring Planted Crops & Perennial Grasses

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## USDA Extends Deadline for Underserved Producers to Receive Additional Pandemic Assistance



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued nearly \$290.5 million in top-up payments through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP) to nearly 172,000 underserved producers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to issue payments to underserved producers who participated in CFAP 2 and are certified as underserved producers.

Producers without form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, on file can submit by

**March 31, 2023**, to receive the top-up payment. This is an extension from the Feb. 10, 2023, deadline. Contact your local [USDA Service Center](#) for more information.

The top-up payment is part of a broader effort by the Biden-Harris administration to better reach agricultural producers and industries impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions by providing a holistic, inclusive approach to pandemic assistance.

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## Big Horn County Producers Urged to Consider NAP Risk Protection Coverage Before Crop Sales Deadlines

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages you to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the crop deadline of April 1, 2023

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available.

The following crops in Big Horn County have a NAP application deadline of April 1, 2023: Small Grain Hay, Grass Seeds, and Soybeans. Call us for other crops if federal crop insurance is unavailable.

You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

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. 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.

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.

If a producer has a *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* (Form CCC-860) on file with FSA, it may serve as an application for basic coverage for all eligible crops beginning with crop year 2022 and all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage will be waived for these producers.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at [USDA's online Agent Locator](#). You can use the [USDA Cost Estimator](#) to predict insurance premium costs.

For more information on NAP, service fees, sales deadlines, contact your Big Horn County USDA Service Center at (307)765-2689 Ext. 2 or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers Impacted by Recent Winter Storms Recovery Assistance

# Available for Livestock Losses in Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming

Agricultural operations in Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming have been significantly impacted by recent snowstorms. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events. Impacted producers should contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages.



“These recent winter storms have taken their toll on livestock producers in Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming leaving producers with snow removal costs as well as increased feed expenses,” said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). “We stand with our producers who have worked tirelessly in these severe conditions to keep livestock fed and to protect crops from Mother Nature’s wrath. We know these storms have left damage in their wake, and I’m glad that USDA offers a strong portfolio of disaster assistance programs available to help.”

## USDA Disaster Recovery Assistance

Producers who experience livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality may be eligible for the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). To participate in LIP, producers will have to provide acceptable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses. ELAP also includes costs associated with equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes or vines lost. This complements the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days.

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the Agency because of reasons beyond their control.

## Risk Management

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA’s [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office. If they have crop insurance, producers should provide a notice of loss to their agent within 72 hours of initial discovery of damage and follow up in writing within 15 days.

For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss \(CCC-576\)](#) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours. A recent policy change simplifies the NAP application process for underserved producers, allowing form CCC-860 Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification to serve as an application for basic NAP coverage for all eligible crops. These producers will have all NAP-related service

fees for basic coverage waived, in addition to a 50% premium reduction if higher levels of coverage are elected.

### Conservation

FSA's [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, damaged farmland or forests.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is always available to provide technical assistance during the recovery process by assisting producers to plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches and working forests impacted by natural disasters. The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) can help producers plan and implement conservation practices on land impacted by natural disasters.

### More Information

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by [winter storms](#). Those resources include the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov](#)

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## USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form will be available starting March 1, 2023.



Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm 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. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

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

- 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.

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov) or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

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## Input Sought at Community Natural Resource Conservation Meeting

The Conservation Districts in Park, Big Horn and Washakie Counties would like to invite the public --- individuals, organizations, businesses and agencies --- to participate in the NRCS Division 1 Local Work Group meeting to be held at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the Meeteetse Conservation District office (1906 State St. in Meeteetse).



The purpose of this meeting is to allow a broad range of local stakeholders with an interest in natural resource issues and Farm Bill funding programs to provide feedback on these topics to the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The Farm Bill stipulates that conservation programs must continue to be locally led. Through these meetings, the public is given an opportunity to help local conservation leaders set priorities such as ranking resource concerns and identifying priority watersheds and other local needs.

If you would like to participate virtually, please contact your local Conservation District office, South Big Horn CD 307-765-2483, Shoshone CD 307-548-7422, the Meeteetse Conservation District at (307) 868-2484 or [meeteetse@conservevy.net](mailto:meeteetse@conservevy.net)!



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