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Laramie County Comments

Happy November Laramie County Farmers and Ranchers!

The deadline to report your fall seeded crops is this **Today, November 15th!** Please contact us immediately to get your reporting done, if you have not done so already.

The deadline to sign up for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is **December 1, 2023** for grasses and fall seeded crops. If you are interested in signing up; please contact the office.



NAP Information: Producers with NAP coverage in 2023 are urged to report their harvested production. FSA can supply maps for you to record your harvested production on a field-by-field basis. Timely and accurately reporting these yields is key to your farm's Actual Production History (APH) and indemnity payments. Producers with no harvested production must have an appraisal completed prior to grazing the acreage. Failure to do this will result in a reduced indemnity payment.

We have a new round of Emergency Relief Programs (ERP) that are available for signup. Please see below article for more information on ERP 2022 track 1 and track 2.

The Livestock Forage Program triggered back in May this year, and signups will run through January 30, 2024. Please contact the office for more information.

-Laramie County FSA

The Office will be closed on November 23rd for the Thanksgiving Day Holiday.

-Laramie County FSA & NRCS

USDA to Provide More Than \$3 Billion to Commodity and Specialty Crop Producers Impacted by 2022 Natural Disasters

The U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide more than \$3 billion to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2022. Eligible impacted producers can apply for financial assistance through the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) 2022](#). The program will help offset the financial impacts of crop yield and value losses from qualifying disasters occurring in 2022.

"2022 was another year of weather-related challenges — for some, the third consecutive year or more in a row. The financial impact to a family farm or ranch in one year is significant but the cumulative impact of multiple years can be devastating," said USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. "In our

continued commitment to improving our delivery of emergency relief assistance, we have further refined our Emergency Relief Program 2022 delivery process. Instead of two separate program phases, we will now run two tracks concurrently increasing our efficiencies in application and payment processing while ensuring equitable program delivery. We also listened to important input from producers and stakeholders and have enhanced ERP 2022 provisions to ensure shallow loss impacts on revenue are considered.”

Background

On Dec. 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328) that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by eligible natural disasters that occurred in calendar year 2022.

ERP 2022 covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

ERP 2022 program benefits will be delivered to eligible producers through a two-track process. FSA intends to make both tracks available to producers at the same time. This two-track approach enables USDA to:

- Streamline the application process.
- Reduce the paperwork burden on producers.
- Proactively include provisions for underserved producers who have not been well served by past emergency relief efforts.
- Encourage producer participation in existing risk management programs to mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events.

It's important to note that disaster-impacted producers may be eligible for ERP 2022 assistance under one or both tracks. To avoid duplicative benefits, if a producer applies for both tracks, the Track 2 payment calculation will take into account any payments received through Track 1.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 1

ERP 2022 Track 1 leverages existing federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments for eligible crop producers who received indemnities through these risk management programs.

Although FSA is sending pre-filled ERP 2022 Track 1 application forms to producers who have crop insurance and NAP data already on file with USDA, producers indemnified for losses resulting from 2022 natural disasters do not have to wait to receive the application before requesting ERP 2022 assistance. Effective Oct. 31, 2023, producers can apply for ERP 2022 benefits whether they have received the pre-filled application or not. Receipt of a pre-filled application is not confirmation that a producer is eligible to receive an ERP 2022 Track 1 payment.

USDA estimates that ERP Track 1 benefits will reach more than 206,000 producers who received indemnities for losses covered by federal crop insurance and more than 4,500 producers who obtained NAP coverage for the 2022 crop year.

ERP 2022 Application Process – Track 2

Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist eligible producers who suffered an eligible decrease in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year using revenue information that is readily available from most tax records. In cases where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, Track 2 provides an alternative method for establishing revenue. Likewise, Track 2 affords producers of crops that are used within an operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop a method for establishing revenue for the purpose of applying for

ERP 2022 benefits. Producers are not required to submit tax records to FSA unless requested by the County Committee if required for an FSA compliance spot check.

Although not required when applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, applicants might find the following documents useful to the process:

- Schedule F (Form 1040)
- *Profit or Loss from Farming* or similar tax documents for tax years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Track 2 targets gaps in emergency relief assistance for eligible producers whose eligible losses were not covered by crop insurance or NAP including revenue losses too small (shallow loss) to be covered by crop insurance.

Producers interested in applying for ERP 2022 Track 2, should contact their local FSA county office. Additional reference resources can be found on FSA's [emergency relief website](#).

Additional Required Forms

For both ERP 2022 tracks, all producers must have certain required forms on file with FSA within 60 days of the ERP 2022 deadline. Producers can apply for ERP 2022 starting Oct. 31, 2023. The application deadline has not yet been determined and will be announced at a later date. If not already on file, producers can update, complete and submit required forms to FSA at any time.

Required forms:

- Form AD-2047, *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- Form CCC-902, *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- Form CCC-901, *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- Form FSA-510, *Request for an Exception to the \$125,000 Payment Limitation for Certain Programs* (if applicable).
- Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification*, if applicable, for the 2022 program year.
- A highly erodible land conservation (sometimes referred to as HELC) and wetland conservation certification (Form AD-1026 *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*) for the ERP producer and applicable affiliates.

Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these required forms on file. However, those who are uncertain or want to confirm the status of their forms can contact their local FSA county office.

Future Insurance Coverage Requirements

All producers who receive ERP 2022 payments must purchase crop insurance, or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available, in the next two available crop years as determined by the Secretary. Purchased 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.

More Information

ERP 2022 eligibility details and payment calculation factor tables are available on the [emergency relief website](#), in the ERP Track 1 and ERP Track 2 fact sheets and through your local [FSA county office](#).

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 usda.gov.

USDA Reminds Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in Laramie County Committee Election

December 4 is the Last Day to Return Ballots

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has started mailing ballots for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee elections to eligible farmers and ranchers across the country. To be counted, ballots must be returned to the Laramie County FSA office or postmarked by Dec. 4, 2023.

“FSA county committee members provide valuable knowledge and judgment as decisions are made about the services we provide, including disaster and safety-net programs,” said Lori Meier, county executive director for Laramie County. “Please take a few minutes to review your ballot and make your selection prior to the Dec. 4 deadline.”

Each committee has from three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office, and at least one seat is up for election each year for a certain Local Administrative Area (LAA). Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2024. Laramie County committee members help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, emergency programs and eligibility.

The following producer has been nominated and is running in the 2023 election in LAA 3; T.J. Hollingsworth. LAA 3 includes all land West of County Road 136 in Laramie County.

T.J. Hollingsworth is nominated in LAA #3 in Laramie County to serve as a county committee member for a 3-year term. Hollingsworth resides northwest of Cheyenne and has run a livestock operation for many years. 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 to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Also, for county committee elections, producers who are not of legal voting age, but supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, are eligible to vote.

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. Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections. Eligible voters who do not receive a ballot in the mail can request one from the Laramie County FSA office at 11221 US Hwy 30 or call (307) 772-2314 ext. 2.

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.

Conservation Practices Can Protect Livestock from Harmful Algal Blooms This Summer

Summer is the season for freshwater harmful algal blooms, which can produce toxins that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has several conservation practices that may help farmers and ranchers protect animals and people by restricting access to contaminated water or providing alternate water sources.

The ABCs of HABs

Freshwater harmful algal blooms (HABs) are usually caused by rapid of blue-green algae (known as cyanobacteria) in water bodies such as lakes, ponds, and streams. These organisms can produce toxins (known as cyanotoxins) that are harmful to humans, livestock, working animals, and pets. Contacting or ingesting contaminated water (including water spray or mist) can result in irritation, illness, or even death.

Cyanobacteria are naturally found in water bodies, so they cannot be eradicated. Instead, it's important to understand how and why blooms occur. Cyanobacterial blooms and their potential toxicity often are a result of excess nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, in water bodies. Excess nutrients can come from adjacent agricultural lands, livestock waste, and leaky septic systems, among other sources. HABs typically form in summer, when warm, nutrient-rich, stagnant waters and more frequent sunlight increase the opportunity for their growth.

Treatment of current HABs involves chemical, biological, or mechanical treatment targeted directly at the contaminated waters. Prevention of future HABs involves changing the conditions that favor cyanobacteria, including nutrient management of the surrounding land and trapping or treating nutrient losses to waterbodies.

Risks HABs pose to livestock, working animals, and pets

Symptoms* of cyanotoxin exposure in animals include:

- vomiting
- excessive salivation
- fatigue
- staggered walking

- difficulty breathing
- weakness
- convulsions
- liver failure

In severe cases, HAB poisoning can lead to death. Therefore, any potential intoxication needs to be immediately addressed by qualified professionals.

NRCS is not the authority on HAB symptoms in animals and humans. Please refer to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#) for further information on HAB symptoms or contact your state or county health department.

Steps you can take if a potential exposure to cyanotoxins has occurred:

1. Eliminate animal access to the suspected contaminated water source.
2. Wash animals with clean water and monitor for symptoms of exposure to cyanotoxins. Isolate any animals exhibiting symptoms and seek veterinary care as soon as possible.
3. An alternative source of livestock drinking water might be needed.
4. Contact the appropriate state agency for sampling and testing guidance to test the water source for HABs and cyanotoxins. It is not safe for landowners to sample the water themselves without proper personal protective equipment and procedures.
5. If a HAB occurs, there is potential for recurrence. Therefore, the waterbody should be monitored.
6. Adopt conservation practices that reduce the risk of livestock exposure to HABs and prevent and reduce nutrient loading to waters to minimize the risk of future HABs occurrences.

Reduce livestock exposure to HABs

If HABs or cyanotoxins have been detected in a water body, preventing exposure by restricting access is key to ensuring the health and well-being of people, livestock, working animals and pets on the farm.

NRCS has several conservation practices that may be useful to exclude livestock from contaminated waters or provide alternative water sources. Some examples are:

- Fencing
- Pond
- Access control
- Water well
- Watering facility

For more information or assistance:

To learn more about how NRCS can help address HAB concerns or other natural resource concerns, visit the [NRCS website](#) or contact NRCS at your [local USDA Service Center](#).



Laramie County

USDA Service Center

11221 US Hwy 30
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Theron Anderson
Dave Bowman
T.J. Hollingsworth
Heidi Romsa

Next COC Meeting:

December 7, 2023 @ 10 a.m.