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A Message from the CED

Important Dates:

December 1, 2023 – Deadline to apply for 2024 Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on fall-seeded crops and perennial crops and pasture. **December 4, 2023** - COC Election Ballots due in the office or postmarked
January 30, 2024 - 2023 LFP Deadline

Office Closures:

December 25, 2023 - In observance of Christmas Day
January 1, 2024 - In observance of New Year's Day

It's almost December and harvest is complete. As you are looking towards the holidays, please consider these reminders:

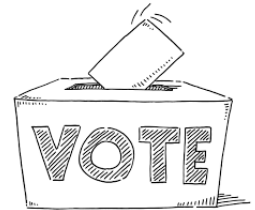
- If you were expecting a payment this fall and have not received it, please contact the office so we can help you start the process of tracking the payment.
- If your banking information has changed since the last time you received a payment from our office, please contact us to update your direct deposit information. Account changes are not automatically reported to us (our system is different than NRCS or Farm Loan) and having the wrong account on file can hold up payments from getting to producers for additional weeks.
- Platte county has been very fortunate this year with moisture. But, the Livestock Forage Program is a resource for grazing losses sustained in drought conditions during the county's normal grazing season. This year is the first year since 2020 that Platte county ground is not eligible for this program. For **Laramie** and **Goshen** counties, the program triggered at the very beginning of the grazing season due to a portion of those counties registering in a D3 level of drought on the Drought Monitor. Fortunately, both counties pulled out of the D3 level 2 weeks into the grazing season and have had good moisture and pasture growth since then. Producers who suffered grazing losses due to those early drought conditions can apply for the LFP program for ground physically located in Goshen and Laramie counties. **Albany** county acres that are winter grazed (BLM ground) are also eligible for LFP payments IF producers had grazing losses due to drought at the end of 2022.
- The Organic Certification and Cost Share Program is open for applications covering organic expenses PAID between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023. Producers need to provide copies of the paid organic costs to the office and sign the application for cost share. Producers can receive up to \$750 in cost share assistance.

- Finally, producers should have started receiving prefilled applications for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) 2022 in the mail. Check out the article below for more information on this program and signups.

-Pam Metz

FSA Encourages Farmers and Ranchers to Vote in County Committee Elections

The 2023 Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections will begin on Nov. 6, 2023, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 4, 2023.



County committee members are an important component of the operations of FSA and provide a link between the agricultural community and USDA. Farmers and ranchers elected to county committees help deliver FSA programs at the local level, applying their knowledge and judgment to make decisions on commodity price support programs; conservation programs; incentive, indemnity and disaster programs for some commodities; emergency programs and eligibility. FSA committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws.

To be an eligible voter, farmers and ranchers must:

- Be of legal voting age or, if not of legal voting age, supervise and conduct the farming operation of an entire farm.
- Have an interest in a farm or ranch as either:
 - An individual who meets one or more of the following:
 - Is eligible and capable to vote in one's own right.
 - Is a partner of a general partnership.
 - Is a member of a joint venture.
 - Participates or cooperates in any FSA program that is provided by law. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information to FSA about their farming or ranching operation(s) but may not have applied or received program benefits.

Eligible voters in Local Administrative Area 1, who do not receive a ballot can obtain one from their local FSA county office. Customers can identify which LAA they or their farming operation is in by using our new GIS locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2024.

The candidates in this year's election are:

Dareth Smialek is nominated in LAA 1, Platte County, to serve as a committee member for a 3-year term. Smialek resides in Glendo and has produced wheat, hay and cattle for many years.

She is a current member of the Platte County Committee and serves as Vice-Chairperson.

More information on county committees can be found at fsa.usda.gov/elections or by contacting the Platte County FSA office.

Emergency Relief Program (ERP) 2022



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.

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 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.

NRCS is Now Accepting Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Applications for the Inflation Reduction Act Climate Smart Effort

(EQIP) Applications Must be received by November 29, 2023

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wyoming is currently accepting applications for enrollment into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the Inflation Reduction Act.

The project focuses on climate-smart agriculture and forestry (CSAF) mitigation practices in Wyoming. Some of the most popular practices in Wyoming will be eligible for this effort. Some of these practices include cover crop, forest stand improvement, nutrient management, and prescribed grazing. **Producers interested in implementing conservation practices to improve natural resources on their private agricultural land have until November 29, 2023 to submit applications.** *Applications are accepted on a continual basis, so even if you miss the November 29th deadline, you can still apply. It is possible that there will be more funding opportunities in FY 2024.*

The opportunities to participate in EQIP are diverse. In addition to the general EQIP project enrollment, the Program also affords socially disadvantaged, beginning, and limited resource farmers and ranchers specific opportunities to improve or enhance natural resources on their lands.

Producers must have farm records current with the Farm Service Agency and submit a complete program application to NRCS to be considered for financial assistance through EQIP. Applications are accepted in all Wyoming NRCS USDA Service Centers for this effort. To find out more information about EQIP please visit the [EQIP webpage](#). To locate an NRCS field office near you, please visit the [USDA Service Center webpage](#).

When visiting with NRCS staff about the EQIP program, landowners are encouraged to inquire about NRCS' comprehensive conservation plans. The Agency continually strives to put conservation planning at the forefront of its programs and initiatives. Conservation plans provide landowners with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of their resources, as well as an appropriate start to improving the quality of soil, water, air, plants, and wildlife on their land.



USDA Service Center

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Next County Committee Meeting:
December 7, 2023 @ 10:00am

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