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USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

USDA is accepting more than 1 million acres in this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup. This is one of several signups that USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is holding for the program. The results for CRP General signup reflect the continued importance of CRP as a tool to help producers invest in the long-term health, sustainability, and profitability of their land and resources. Offers for new land in this General CRP signup totaled about 295,000 acres nationwide. Producers submitted re-enrollment offers for 891,000 expiring acres, reflecting the successes of participating in CRP longer term. The total number of CRP acres will continue to climb in the coming weeks once FSA accepts acres from the Grassland CRP signup, which closed May 26. Additionally, so far this year, FSA has received 761,000 offered acres for the Continuous CRP signup, for which FSA accepts applications year-round. The number of accepted acres that are enrolled in General CRP will be confirmed later this year. Participating producers and landowners should also remember that submitting and accepting a CRP offer is the first step, and producers still need to develop a conservation plan before contracts become effective on October 1, 2023. Each year, during the window between offer acceptance and land enrollment, some producers ultimately decide not to enroll some accepted acres, without penalty.



General CRP Signup

The General CRP Signup 60 ran from February 27 through April 7, 2023. Through CRP, producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve soil health and water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on agricultural land. In addition to the other well-documented benefits, lands enrolled in CRP are playing a key role in climate change mitigation efforts across the country. In 2021, FSA introduced improvements to the program, which included a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This incentive provides an annual 3, 5, or 10 percent incentive payment based on the predominant vegetation type for the practices enrolled – from grasses to trees to wetland restoration.

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and view other farm records data and customer information by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

USDA Reminds Wyoming Livestock Producers of Available Drought Assistance

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds drought-impacted producers in Wyoming that they may be eligible for assistance through the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#).

For eligible livestock in qualifying counties, ELAP provides financial assistance for:

- the transportation of water to livestock;
- the above normal cost of mileage for transporting feed to livestock; and
- the above normal cost of transporting livestock to forage/grazing acres.* **Hauling livestock both ways starting in 2023, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for "empty miles."*

Eligible livestock include cattle, bison, goats and sheep, among others, that are maintained for commercial use and located in a county where qualifying drought conditions occur. A county must have had D2 severe drought intensity on the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for eight consecutive weeks during the normal grazing period, or D3 or D4 drought intensity at any time during the normal grazing period. Producers must have risk in both eligible livestock and eligible grazing land in an eligible county to qualify for ELAP assistance.

Transporting Water

Producers must be transporting water to eligible livestock on eligible grazing land where adequate livestock watering systems or facilities were in place before the drought occurred and where water transportation is not normally required. ELAP covers costs associated with personal labor, equipment, hired labor, and contracted water transportation fees. Cost of the water itself is not covered. ELAP covers \$0.07 per gallon to transport water.

Transporting Feed

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who incur above normal expenses for transporting feed to livestock during drought. The payment formula excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the cost above what would normally would have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year.

Livestock feed that is transported to livestock located on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is eligible if the producer has an approved conservation plan with acceptable grazing practices developed in coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The payment rate to transport feed is \$6.60/ loaded mile for expenses above what would have normally been incurred.

Transporting Livestock

ELAP provides financial assistance to livestock producers who are hauling livestock to a new location for feed resources due to insufficient feed or grazing in drought-impacted areas. As with transporting feed, the payment formula for transporting livestock excludes the first 25 miles and any mileage over 1,000 miles. The reimbursement rate is 60% of the costs above what would normally have been incurred during the same time period in a normal (non-drought) year.

The payment rate to transport livestock is \$6.60/loaded mile for expenses above what would have normally been incurred and covers hauling livestock one-way, one haul per animal reimbursement and no payment for “empty miles.”

An [online tool](#) is now available to help ranchers document and estimate payments to cover feed and livestock transportation costs caused by drought.

Reporting Losses

Producers should contact FSA as soon as the loss of water or feed resources are known.

For ELAP eligibility, documentation of expenses is critical. Producers should maintain records and receipts associated with the costs of transporting water to eligible livestock, the costs of transporting feed to eligible livestock, the costs of additional feed purchases, and the costs of transporting eligible livestock to forage or other grazing acres.

Producers interested in ELAP assistance can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn more or to apply for programs.

USDA Accepts Nearly 2.7 Million Acres in Grassland CRP Signup, Successfully Closing the Gap and bringing CRP Near to Acreage Cap



USDA is accepting offers for nearly 2.7 million acres from agricultural producers and private landowners through this year’s Grassland [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) signup, which received a record setting sign-up of 4.6 million acres in offers. This working lands program allows producers and landowners to continue grazing and haying practices while protecting grasslands and further the CRP’s impacts. Grassland CRP is part of the Biden-Harris administration’s broader effort to address climate change and conserve natural resources.

Grassland CRP leverages working lands practices to improve biodiversity and conserve environmentally sensitive land. To target conservation in key geographies, USDA prioritizes land within two National Priority Zones: the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Dust Bowl area. Building upon the nearly 2.4 million acres already in the Priority Zones, this year’s more than 900,000 acres continues to robustly demonstrate that producers in these areas recognize the keen conservation value of Grassland CRP. Land enrolled in these zones will contribute to broader USDA conservation efforts through [Working Lands for Wildlife](#) by conserving working grasslands and other lands that underpin iconic big game migrations.

Grasslands enrolled in CRP help sequester carbon in vegetation and soil, while enhancing resilience to drought and wildfire. Meanwhile, producers can still conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land, which supports agricultural production.

In addition to the Grassland signup, FSA also has accepted more than 1 million acres through the General signup, and more than 465,800 acres have been submitted through the Continuous CRP signup so far this year, on pace to be similar to last year’s nearly 900,000-acre enrollment.

As part of USDA’s Justice40 efforts, producers and landowners who are underserved, including beginning farmers, limited-resource producers and military veterans, received 20 additional ranking points to enhance their offers. USDA accepted 1.8 million acres from underserved producers, about 74% of the total acres submitted by the 6,400 underserved producers who submitted offers.

Additionally, USDA is working to broaden the scope and reach of Grassland CRP by leveraging CREP to engage underserved communities. CREP is a partnership program that enables states, Tribal governments,

and non-profit entities to partner with FSA to implement CRP practices and address high priority conservation and environmental objectives. Interested entities are encouraged to contact FSA.

Producers can still make an offer to participate in CRP through the [Continuous CRP signup](#), which is ongoing, by contacting FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Financial Assistance Application Process Opens for USDA Farm Loan Borrowers Who Have Faced Discrimination

USDA announced the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.



The program website, 22007apply.gov, is now open. The website includes an English- and Spanish-language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs prior to January 1, 2021 and/or are currently debtors with assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was the subject of USDA discrimination that occurred prior to January 1, 2021, are eligible for this program.

To apply, borrowers have the option to apply via the e-filing portal at 22007apply.gov or submit paper-based forms via mail or in-person delivery to the program's local offices. The application process will be open from July 7 to October 31, 2023. Under the planned timeline, applications will be reviewed in November and December, with payments reaching recipients soon thereafter. Importantly, applicants should know that the application process is not on a first come, first served, basis. All applications received or postmarked before the October 31 deadline will be considered.

To support producers throughout the application process, USDA is ensuring that organizations with extensive experience conducting outreach to farm organizations are able to support individuals who may be eligible for the program. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

Vendors operating four regional hubs are also providing technical assistance and working closely with these and other community-based organizations to conduct outreach using digital and grassroots strategies, to ensure potential applicants are informed about the program and have the opportunity to apply. These hubs are operating a network of brick-and-mortar program offices and will conduct extensive outreach about the program. Windsor Group serves farmers in the eastern regions of the U.S. and Analytic Acquisitions serves the western regions. A national administrator, Midtown Group, is responsible for program oversight and integrity, and will lead a national call-center, operate the application website - 22007apply.gov, which is now open – and review and process applications and payments. All vendors have experience in professional services, supporting government contracts, and complex program operations.

In standing up this program, USDA has become aware of some lawyers and groups spreading misleading information about the discrimination assistance process, pressuring people to sign retainer agreements, and asking people to fill out forms with private and sensitive information. As of today, the official application process has begun and filling out an application is free.

No attorneys' fees will be paid to applicants or their counsel by USDA or by any other agency or department of the United States. The amount of financial assistance will not be increased for those claimants who are represented by an attorney. Applicants are not required to retain an attorney. USDA, the national administrator, and the regional hub vendors will neither recommend that any applicant retain counsel or retain a specific attorney or law firm, nor discourage an applicant from obtaining counsel or using a specific attorney

or law firm. For more information, read our [fact sheet about the program timeline and ways to protect against possible scams](#).

Policy Updates for Acreage Reporting



The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently made several policy updates for acreage reporting for cover crops, revising intended use, late-filed provisions, grazing allotments as well as updated the definitions of “idle” and “fallow.”

Reporting Cover Crops:

Cover crop types can be chosen from the following four categories:

- **Cereals and other grasses**
- **Legumes**
- **Brassicas and other broadleaves**
- **Mixtures**

If the cover crop is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated according to policy guidelines, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop and the acreage report must be revised to reflect the actual crop.

Permitted Revision of Intended use After Acreage Reporting Date:

New operators or owners who pick up a farm after the acreage reporting deadline has passed and the crop has already been reported on the farm, have 30 calendar days from the date when the new operator or owner acquired the lease on land, control of the land or ownership and new producer crop share interest in the previously reported crop acreage. Under this policy, appropriate documentation must be provided to the County Committee's satisfaction to determine that a legitimate operator or ownership and producer crop share interest change occurred to permit the revision.

Acreage Reports:

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, you must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

Reporting Grazing Allotments:

FSA offices can now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. You will use form “FSA-578” to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the “Reporting Unit” field. Your local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land.

Definitions of Terms

FSA defines “idle” as cropland or a balance of cropland within a Common Land Unit (CLU) (field/subfield) which is not planted or considered not planted and does not meet the definition of fallow or skip row.

Fallow is considered unplanted cropland acres which are part of a crop/fallow rotation where cultivated land that is normally planted is purposely kept out of production during a regular growing season.

For more information contact your local county FSA Office.

Beginning Farmer Loan Opportunity

Accessing capital to begin, extend or support an agriculture operation can be especially challenging to new producers. Farm Service Agency's “Beginning Farmer” direct and guaranteed loan programs provide an

opportunity for qualified applicants to secure loans from funding set aside for producers who meet the following conditions:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

For more information contact, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Guide Available for Underserved Farmers, Ranchers

A multi-agency guide for USDA assistance for underserved farmers and ranchers is now available. If you are a farmer or rancher and are a minority, woman, veteran, beginning, or limited resource producer, you can use this booklet to learn about assistance and targeted opportunities available to you. This includes programs offered through the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency. [Download the guide here](#). The guide is also available in Spanish, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese on farmers.gov/translations.

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).