

In This Issue:

- [Message from Acting State Executive Director Danny Hoots](#)
- [Message from State Conservationist Mike Sullivan](#)
- [Upcoming Events and Workshops](#)
- [2021 County Committee Elections](#)
- [Understanding the U.S. Drought Monitor](#)
- [Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA](#)
- [USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification](#)
- [Applying for FSA Direct Loans](#)
- [Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans](#)
- [5 Million Acres in Conservation Easements](#)
- [USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option](#)
- [High Tunnels Provide More Locally Grown Fresh Fruits, Veggies](#)
- [Save Time – Make an Appointment with NRCS](#)
- [Rates and Dates](#)

Message from Acting State Executive Director Danny Hoots

FSA is providing additional time for livestock and poultry producers to apply for the [Pandemic Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (PLIP). Producers who suffered losses during the pandemic due to insufficient access to processing may now apply for assistance for those losses and the cost of depopulation and disposal of the animals through October 12, 2021, rather than the original deadline of September 17, 2021.

Intermediary lenders can now apply for loans through the new Heirs' Property Relending Program. FSA is accepting applications through October 29, 2021. Cooperatives, credit

unions, and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to apply for these competitive loans. This will ultimately help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues.

Farmers and ranchers can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units from the USDA through a new feature on farmers.gov. These features join several others already available through the farmers.gov portal, including the ability to view farm loan information and manage conservation activities.

USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) (AMS) announced it will soon publish Requests for Applications (RFAs) for the Pandemic Response and Safety (PRS) Grants program to support agricultural stakeholders who haven't yet received substantial federal financial assistance in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. This grant program will provide assistance to small businesses in certain commodity areas, including small scale specialty crop producers, food processors, manufacturers, distributors and farmers markets.

For more information, contact your [local USDA service center](#) or visit www.farmers.gov.

Please take advantage of these Opportunities. Until next time...

Message from State Conservationist Mike Sullivan

As a farmer, rancher or forester, you face many decisions when managing your natural resources. When you evaluate options for your operation, technical and financial assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help improve your resource management and cropping system. A conservation plan can be developed to improve management for additional resource concerns. NRCS staff and your local Soil and Water conservation district are available to assist you with the right choices for you to protect your operation and resources.

NRCS continues its conservation work across Arkansas despite a tough 2021 marked with a continuing pandemic and several natural disasters. We continue to deliver services using social distancing guidelines, phone and online tools. All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will continue to work with our producers by phone, email and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

FY 2022 Planning and Implementation

As we approach Fiscal Year (FY) 22, please follow-up with your local NRCS office if you have requested conservation assistance and/or a conservation plan. If the conservation plan meets your and NRCS's needs and objectives, please submit an application for

financial assistance for FY22. Those who are interested in receiving technical and/or financial assistance from NRCS, please contact your local NRCS field office. To find your local USDA Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov/service-locator.

Upcoming Events and Workshops

The USDA Arkansas Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to educating producers on available programs and loans. FSA representatives will be available at the following workshops and conferences. Producers interested in attending these conferences/workshops should follow the registration or RSVP instructions listed below.

Sep 30th – Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program (PATHH) Outreach Meeting Arkansas FSA is hosting a virtual Meeting to provide information on the Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers Program (PATHH). **Sarah Padgett**, Agricultural Program Specialist, will be presenting. This virtual meeting will be held Thursday, September 30, 2021 beginning at 10:00am.

Please join on your computer or mobile app - [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only) - [+1 636-352-2946](tel:+16363522946), [479335237#](tel:+1479335237) United States, St. Charles
Phone Conference ID: 479 335 237#

2021 County Committee Elections



County Committee Elections 2021



Date	Event Description
Jun. 15 2021	Beginning of nomination period. Forms available at fsa.usda.gov/elections .
Aug. 2 2021	Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA county office.
Nov. 1 2021	Ballots mailed to eligible voters.
Dec. 6 2021	Last day to return voted ballots to the local FSA county office.
Jan. 1 2022	Newly elected county committee members take office.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The 2021 Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee (COC) Elections will begin on Nov. 1, 2021, when ballots are mailed to eligible voters. The deadline to return ballots to local FSA offices, or to be postmarked, is Dec. 6, 2021.

Understanding the U.S. Drought Monitor

Are drought conditions affecting your agricultural operation? The [U.S. Drought Monitor \(USDM\)](#) is a resource producers can use to help determine how to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers.

The USDM is an online, weekly map showing the location, extent, and severity of drought across the United States. It categorizes the entire country as being in one of six levels of drought. The map is released on Thursdays and depicts conditions for the week.

The USDM provides producers with the latest information about drought conditions where they live, enabling producers to best respond and react to a drought as it develops or lingers. In some cases, the USDM may help a producer make specific decisions about their operation, such as reducing the stocking rate because forage is not growing. For others, it may provide a convenient big-picture snapshot of broader environmental conditions.

The USDM incorporates varying data – rain, snow, temperature, streamflow, reservoir levels, soil moisture, and more – as well as first-hand information submitted from on-the-ground sources such as photos, descriptions, and experiences. The levels of drought are connected to the frequency of occurrence across [several different drought indicators](#). What makes the USDM unique is that it is not a strictly numeric product. The mapmakers rely on their judgment and a nationwide network of 450-plus experts to interpret conditions for each region. They synthesize their discussion and analysis into a single depiction of drought for the entire country.

USDA uses the Drought Monitor to determine a producer's eligibility for certain drought assistance programs, like the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) and [Emergency Haying or Grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acres](#).

Additionally, the Farm Service Agency uses the Drought Monitor to trigger and “fast track” Secretarial Disaster Designations which then provides producers impacted by drought access to emergency loans that can assist with credit needs.

[Learn more about the U.S. Drought Monitor.](#)

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop

insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

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

USDA Accepting Applications to Help Cover Costs for Organic Certification

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that organic producers and handlers can apply for USDA funds to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic certification through the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) (OCCSP). Applications for eligible certification expenses paid between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021, are due Nov. 1, 2021.

OCCSP provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products for the costs of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program. Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent. Producers can be reimbursed for expenses including application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

For 2021, OCCSP will reimburse 50 percent of a certified operation's allowable certification costs, up to a maximum of \$500 for each of the following categories or "scopes:"

- crops
- wild crops
- livestock
- processing/handling
- State organic program fees.

Organic farmers and ranchers may apply through an FSA county office or a participating state agency.

More Information

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit the [OCCSP webpage](#), visit usda.gov/organic, or contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

Applying for FSA Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain, or strengthen their farm or ranch. Direct loans are processed, approved and serviced by FSA loan officers.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance, and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for direct farm ownership loans is \$600,000 and the maximum loan amount for direct operating loans is \$400,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,776,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

For more information on guaranteed loans, please contact your local FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov.

5 Million Acres in Conservation Easements

NRCS has reached an impressive new milestone: enough acres in easements to fill the state of New Jersey. The 5 million acres have been enrolled across all the conservation easement programs offered by NRCS over the past 28 years.

Farmers, ranchers, and private landowners who enroll their acres in conservation easements ensure protection of sensitive lands, support wildlife, and confront challenges like climate change.

Currently, NRCS offers conservation easements through the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP), which helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

By the Numbers

- 5 Million acres enrolled in conservation easements
- 2.8 Million acres in wetland easements
- 1.9 million acres in agricultural easements, including grassland easements
- 110,000 acres enrolled in FY 2021
- 28 years of conservation easements

In Arkansas

- 18 Easements*
- 7,924 Acres*
- \$27,518,772 Acquisition and Restoration*

*(*FY20 Program Accomplishments)*

Enrolling in Easements

Farmers, ranchers, and private foresters looking to enroll farmland, grasslands, or wetlands in a conservation easement may submit proposals to the [NRCS state office](#) to acquire conservation easements on eligible land. To enroll land through wetland reserve easements, landowners should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) or contact Randy Childress, assistant state conservationist for Easements at randy.childress@usda.gov.

USDA offers a variety of conservation programs that provide help to plan and implement conservation practices on farms, ranches or forests. Learn more about putting conservation to work through our [Conservation at Work](#) video series.

USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option

If you're a historically underserved producer and participating in the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), you can receive an advance conservation practice payment before you implement a practice.

A [historically underserved producer](#) is described as one of the below:

- **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** – is new to farming or ranching, or, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years.
- **Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** – is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of that group without regard to their individual qualities.
- **Veteran Farmer or Rancher** – has served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm or ranch, has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10-consecutive years, or first obtained veteran status during the last 10 years.
- **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher** – has a household income at or below the national poverty level. Eligibility can be determined by using [this online tool](#).

Under the advance payment option, such producers may request payments when they have final designs and job sheets and are ready to begin their EQIP practices. Advance payments provide at least 50 percent of the payment rate for each practice. The funds must be spent within 90 days of receipt and practices must be completed as agreed to in an EQIP plan of operations. Producers also may opt to have NRCS pay the contractors or vendors directly.

For more information, visit the [advance payments](#) webpage where you can download the [EQIP Advance Payment Fact Sheet](#).

High Tunnels Provide More Locally Grown Fresh Fruits, Veggies

It's hard to beat produce grown in Arkansas. It's often fresher and tastier, uses less energy for transport, and helps farmers in your community. But the off-season presents a big challenge for farmers who grow fruits and vegetables and for consumers who want to find local produce throughout the year.

When farmers can lengthen the growing season, even by several weeks, their options change. That's why the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service promotes seasonal high tunnel as such a powerful tool. High tunnels are plastic-wrapped, metal-framed structures that are fairly easy and inexpensive to build. They are designed to extend the growing season into the colder months, helping to increase the availability of local produce, keep plants at a steady temperature and even conserve water and energy.

High tunnels are similar to greenhouses, except they are considered “passively heated.” That means they do not require electricity to heat – only sunlight. The plastic on the frame actually provides enough insulation to add up to 12 extra weeks to the growing season, depending on location. The inside of a high tunnel boasts its own microclimate, often producing crops of higher quality and quantity than those in traditional farm fields. High tunnels are also different than greenhouses in that the plants are actually in the ground, not in pots or on tables. You can think of it as a plastic covering over a field.

High tunnels can cut costs for the producer by conserving water and requiring fewer inputs, like fertilizers or pesticides. In high tunnels, these inputs are often applied through tubes that run along the base of the plants, allowing water and fertilizer to be delivered directly above the soil. Outside of high tunnels, these inputs are often dispersed on a larger scale and require more to ensure the plants receive an adequate amount.

NRCS helps farmers build high tunnels, providing technical expertise and funding. Local and regional markets often provide farmers with a higher share of the food dollar, and money spent at a local business often continues to circulate within community, creating a multiplier effect and providing greater economic benefits to the area.

For more information, contact your County USDA Service Center at <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrsc> or visit nrsc.usda.gov.

Save Time – Make an Appointment with NRCS

Producers are encouraged to call their local NRCS office to schedule an appointment to ensure maximum use of their time and to make sure NRCS staff is available to tend to their important business needs. Please call your local NRCS office ahead to set an appointment and to discuss any records or documentation that might be needed during your appointment. To find your local NRCS office, visit: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrsc>.

Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for September 2021			
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125		
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.875		
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.000	Dates to Remember	
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500	09/30/2021	ARCPLC late file deadline
Emergency Loans	2.875	10/12/2021	CFAP2 application deadline
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	0.375	10/12/2021	PLIP (livestock depopulation) deadline
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.000	10/15/2021	PATHH (timber) application deadline
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125	Oct	CRP payments released

Arkansas FSA and NRCS State Offices

700 West Capitol Room 3416
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

www.farmers.gov

[Arkansas State Office \(usda.gov\)](http://Arkansas State Office (usda.gov))

[Home | NRCS \(usda.gov\)](#)

FSA Acting State Director

Danny Hoots

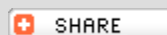
NRCS State Conservationist

Mike Sullivan

*Please contact your local Office for questions specific to your operation or county.
To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ar.*

FSA State Committee Meeting: 2nd Wednesday and Thursday of each Quarter

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