



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Arkansas USDA Newsletter - September 2022

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# **Message from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan**

Each year, we observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. I am proud to work with many great leaders of Hispanic heritage at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). At NRCS, we are very proud of the women and men who make up our diverse workforce. We also celebrate the assistance they provide to our customers in helping them get conservation on the ground.

We also honor and pay tribute to the accomplished and visionary Hispanic farmers, ranchers, and foresters who provide the food and fiber to help feed the world. Join us in supporting the many activities taking place around the Nation in commemoration of National Hispanic Heritage Month. For more information, visit <https://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>.

## **USDA NRCS Chief Terry Cosby Visits Arkansas**

Arkansas NRCS was fortunate to host a second visit from Chief Terry Cosby in August. The Chief was the speaker at the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts meeting. During his speech, he discussed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that was recently signed into law. The IRA represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. The IRA invests around \$40 billion into existing USDA programs promoting climate smart agriculture, rural energy efficiency and reliability, forest conservation, and more. These additional funds will help farmers and ranchers implement expanded conservation practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase storage of carbon in their soil and trees. The conservation funding is on top of otherwise available program funds, and the voluntary, incentive-based approach is targeted to support climate-smart agriculture mitigation and help producers build resilience in their operations.

During the Chief's visit, he also had an opportunity to visit with several producers and conservation partners. He saw firsthand why farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners in Arkansas are some of the best stewards of our land. They're already leading the way in implementing conservation practices and initiatives that benefit us all.

## **USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack Visits Arkansas**

On September 16, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack visited Lonoke County Producer Mark Isbell's farm to discuss with conservation partners and producers the secretary's recent announcement that the Biden-Harris Administration, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity. Funds will be provided through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. The 70 selected Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities projects – spanning up to five years – will:

- Provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on a voluntary basis on working lands;
- Pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and
- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

A complete list of projects identified for this first round of funding is available at [usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities](https://usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities). USDA is committed to equity in program delivery and will ensure that all projects benefit small and/or underserved producers.

As we come to a close to this fiscal year, I want to thank our USDA NRCS Arkansas Team for their continued efforts to deliver services to our customers and partners. I greatly appreciate all the hard work they have accomplished.

Our NRCS Team at our 61 USDA Service Centers across Arkansas stand ready to help you with one-on-one conservation planning assistance. NRCS offers programs to help you improve the sustainability of your land through conservation and recover after natural disasters. To get started, call the NRCS office at your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

## Message from Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Doris Washington

Greetings

Arkansas has received several Secretarial Natural Disaster Designations regarding the 2022 Drought. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, these counties suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season of 1) D2 Drought-Severe for 8 or more consecutive weeks or 2) D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional. Additional information may be found at the [U.S. Drought Monitor](https://www.drought.gov/). These Secretarial Designations allow Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through emergency loans. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation, or the refinance of certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability. On [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can assist to determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Low-Interest Physical Loss Loans, for Producers affected by Natural Disasters, are available High Winds that occurred May 3, 2022 thru July 17, 2022. Physical loss loans help producers repair or replace damaged or destroyed physical property essential to the success of the agricultural operation, including livestock losses. Examples of property commonly affected include essential farm buildings, fixtures to real estate, equipment, livestock, perennial crops, fruit and nut bearing trees and harvested or stored crops and hay. Please visit [Arkansas FSAs Website](#) for the list of Primary and contiguous counties.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that Akiptan, Inc., the Cherokee Nation Economic Development Trust Authority (CNEDTA), and the Shared Capital Cooperative have been approved or conditionally approved as intermediary lenders through the Heirs' Property Relending Program (HPRP). HPRP loans will help agricultural producers and landowners resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues. HPRP intermediary lenders will reloan funds to eligible heirs to resolve title issues by financing the purchase or consolidation of property interests and financing costs associated with a succession plan. This may also include costs and fees associated with buying out fractional interests of other heirs in jointly owned property to clear the title, as well as closing costs, appraisals, title searches, surveys, preparing documents, mediation, and legal services. To learn more about heirs' property, HPRP, or UPHPA, visit [farmers.gov/heirs](https://farmers.gov/heirs) or [farmers.gov/heirs/relending](https://farmers.gov/heirs/relending). Also, USDA encourages more intermediary lenders, including cooperatives, credit unions, and nonprofit organizations to apply. Currently, more than \$100 million of HPRP funding is available for these competitive loans.

USDA is expanding its People's Garden Initiative to include eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban, and urban areas can be recognized as a "People's Garden". Interested individuals/groups should register on the USDA website and meet criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices and educating the public. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People's Garden sign. To learn more about People's Garden or to register one, visit the People's Garden webpage at [usda.gov/Peoples-Garden](https://usda.gov/Peoples-Garden).

To find your local FSA office, please visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

Visit [www.farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) to learn more about FSA Programs.



## **Biden-Harris Administration Announces Historic Investment in Partnerships for 70 Climate-Smart Commodities and Rural Projects**

***USDA to Triple Commitment with Initial \$2.8 Billion Investment Piloting New Revenue Streams for America's Climate-Smart Farmers, Ranchers and Forest Landowners, with Additional Projects to Come***

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that the Biden-Harris Administration through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, including 20 projects that applicants indicate will impact the state of Arkansas, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year.

The Secretary visited England, Arkansas, on September 16 to meet with farmers and to discuss the new programs designed to increase sustainability. Ultimately, USDA's anticipated investment will triple to more than \$3 billion in pilots that will create market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart production practices. These initial projects will expand markets for climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Applicants submitted more than 450 project proposals in this first funding pool,

and the strength of the projects identified led USDA to increase its investment in this opportunity from the initial \$1 billion Vilsack announced earlier this year.

“There is strong and growing interest in the private sector and among consumers for food that is grown in a climate-friendly way,” said Vilsack. “Through this announcement of initial selections for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, USDA is delivering on our promise to build and expand these market opportunities for American agriculture and be global leaders in climate-smart agricultural production. This effort will increase the competitive advantage of U.S. agriculture both domestically and internationally, build wealth that stays in rural communities and support a diverse range of producers and operation types.”

Earlier this year, Vilsack announced that USDA had allocated \$1 billion for the program, divided into two funding pools. Because of the unprecedented demand and interest in the program, and potential for meaningful opportunities to benefit producers through the proposals, the Biden-Harris administration increased the total funding allocation to more than \$3 billion, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year.

Funding for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities will be delivered through USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation in two pools. Projects announced are from the first funding pool, which included proposals seeking funds ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million. USDA received over 450 proposals from more than 350 entities for this funding pool, including nonprofit organizations; for-profits and government entities; farmer cooperatives; conservation, energy and environmental groups; state, tribal and local governments; universities (including minority serving institutions); small businesses; and large corporations. Applications covered every state in the nation as well as tribal lands, D.C. and Puerto Rico. The tentative selections announced reflect this broad set of applicants and geographic scope, and the proposals include plans to match on average over 50% of the federal investment with nonfederal funds.

USDA will work with the applicants for the 70 identified projects to finalize the scope and funding levels in the coming months. A complete list of projects identified for this first round of funding, including the 20 projects that may impact Arkansas, is available at [usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities](https://usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities). These projects include:

- **Rice Stewardship Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities** – This project will build climate-smart rice markets and work to reduce methane emissions in rice production through the adoption of alternate wetting and drying, furrow irrigation, and other climate-smart practices and support historically underserved producers by improving critical infrastructure necessary to implement climate-smart practices in the future. **Lead Partner:** USA Rice Federation, Inc.
- **Tyson Foods, Inc. Climate-Smart Commodities Project** – This project will expand climate-smart markets and increase carbon sequestration and reduce emissions in the production of beef and row crops for livestock feed. Small and underserved producers will receive technical assistance and incentive payments to increase their capacity to reduce emissions and adopt climate-smart practices. **Lead Partner:** Tyson Foods, Inc.
- **Growing Value for Producers** – This project will create and pilot-test a farmer-friendly system that builds capacity with institutions interacting with a range of producers, including underserved producers, to support adoption of climate-smart

practices and interact with commodity buyers in climate-smart markets. **Lead Partner:** Winrock International Institute for Agriculture Development

- **Climate-Smart Cotton through a Sustainable & Innovative Supply Chain Approach** – This project will implement methods to restore soil and ecosystem health in cotton production through regenerative farming and best practices based on specific regions and needs. **Lead Partner:** Ecom USA, LLC

Spanning up to five years, these 70 projects will:

- Provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on a voluntary basis on working lands;
- Pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and
- Develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities.

The projects announced recently will deliver significant impacts for producers and communities nationwide. USDA anticipates that these projects will result in:

- **Hundreds of expanded markets and revenue streams** for producers and commodities across agriculture ranging from traditional corn to specialty crops.
- **More than 50,000 farms reached, encompassing more than 20-25 million acres of working land** engaged in climate-smart production practices such as cover crops, no-till and nutrient management.
- **More than 50 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent sequestered over the lives of the projects.** This is equivalent to removing more than 10 million gasoline-powered passenger vehicles from the road for one year.
- **More than 50 universities, including multiple minority-serving institutions,** engaged and helping advance projects, especially with outreach and monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification.
- Proposals for the 70 selected projects include plans to **match on average over 50% of the federal investment with nonfederal funds.**

Projects were selected based on a range of criteria, with emphasis placed on greenhouse gas and/or carbon sequestration benefits and equity. The [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) included a complete set of project proposal requirements and evaluation criteria.

USDA is currently evaluating project proposals from the second Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding pool, which includes funding requests from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999. Projects from this second funding pool will emphasize the enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions. USDA expects to announce these selections later this Fall.

“America’s farmers, ranchers, and forest owners are leading the way in implementing climate-smart solutions across their operations,” said Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan in Arkansas. “Through Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, USDA will provide targeted funding to meet national and global demand and expand market opportunities for climate-smart commodities to

increase the competitive advantage of American producers. We want a broad array of agriculture and forestry to see themselves in this effort, including small and historically underserved producers as well as early adopters.”

### **More Information**

Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities is part of USDA’s broader strategy to position agriculture and forestry as leaders in climate change mitigation through voluntary, incentive-based, market-driven approaches. Visit [usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities](https://usda.gov/climate-smart-commodities) to learn more about this effort, and [usda.gov/climate-solutions](https://usda.gov/climate-solutions) for climate-related updates, resources and tools across the Department.

Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our Nation’s lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

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 safe, 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](https://www.usda.gov).







## **NRCS Chief Terry Cosby Returns to Speak at the AACD meeting and visit Producers in Arkansas**

For the second time this year, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby came to visit Arkansas. He was a featured speaker at the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) meeting in North Little Rock, August 11-12. Approximately 300 people were in attendance, including U.S. Senator John Boozman and National Association of Conservation Districts President Michael Crowder.





Following the plenary session, Chief Cosby, USDA Senior Advisor for Racial Equity to the Secretary of Agriculture Dr. Dewayne Goldman, NRCS Regional Conservationist James Tillman, and Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan met with Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) Secretary Wes Ward, and Natural Resources Division Director Chris Colclasure. The Chief discussed agriculture and conservation efforts in Arkansas, drought issues including two PL 83-566 watershed projects under construction to address significant ground water decline that are funding priorities for the State, the recent watershed BIL funding announcement, and workforce hiring efforts. The group also discussed NRCS's great partnership working with the ADA and local Conservation Districts.



Chief Cosby also participated in several site visits around Arkansas including two Bipartisan Infrastructure Law related meetings in Camden and Forrest City, visits to urban agriculture farms in Little Rock and North Little Rock, discussions with and about Conservation Districts as well as Equity; a visit to a working rice farm in DeValls Bluff that recently has experienced wells go dry due to declining ground water levels, and a visit to the Grand Prairie Irrigation Project, that is helping agriculture producers use excess surface water in lieu of unsustainable ground water.



## Conservation Partnerships Webinar



Arkansas Conservation Partnerships Roles & Responsibilities Webinar Recording featuring Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6sstdMahGA>

## DIRT - Arkansas PBS Documentary



**Break through the surface to explore the living, breathing ecosystem beneath our feet. “Dirt” — a documentary from Arkansas PBS about saving our soil — delves into how Arkansas farmers, ranchers and more are improving their operations by helping the environment.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8mawEmm49o>

Featured in the film are:

- Margie Raimondo owns and operates Urbana Farmstead inside the city limits of Little Rock.
- Raymond Kelley runs a cow/calf operation in Faulkner County utilizing managed grazing and making sure the grass recovers before the next grazing rotation to maintain soil health.
- Richard White raises cattle near Royal utilizing fenced paddocks and controlled water systems for rotational grazing, installed heavy use areas to control compaction and erosion, and uses biomass plantings to improve his forage.
- Dallas and Katie Peebles produce organic specialty crop vegetables and honey from their on-site hives near Augusta.
- Adam Chappell, who owns and operates an 8,000-acre row crop farm with his brother Seth outside Cotton Plant, is a co-founder of the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance and has become a nationally-recognized speaker.
- Patti and Donnie Larimer, use rotational grazing, controlled water systems and heavy use areas on their small ruminant ranch in Greenwood.
- P.J. Haynie, a fifth-generation row crop farmer whose family owns and operates large farms in several states across the country, serves as chairman of the National Black Growers Council.

“Helping People Help the Land” is what we’ve been doing at the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service since 1935,” said Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. “These success stories shine the spotlight on producers from across Arkansas who explain why they have implemented conservation practices and how they work on their land. These producers share their own conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources, how they save time and save money.

“It all begins with a conservation plan that NRCS offers at no cost. The plan is developed through the Conservation Technical Assistance Program to provide a blueprint to help producers achieve their objectives with personalized advice and information based on the latest science and research and to help them make informed decisions,” Sullivan added.

More information about the film is available at <https://www.myarkansaspbs.org/programs/dirt>.

Major funding for “Dirt” is provided by the Pulaski County Conservation District and the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas.

## 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.

### **October 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> - 2018 ALCDC Annual Youth Day and Annual Conference**

Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) is hosting their Annual Youth Day and Annual Conference. The Annual Youth Day will be held Thursday, Oct. 27, 2022, and the Annual Conference will be held Friday, Oct. 28, 2022. **Linda Cronin, FSA National Outreach Director, will be the Luncheon Speaker.** Additional Information will be forth coming. Please visit [ALCDCs Website](#) for additional information.

### **Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> – National Black Growers Council (NBGC) Annual Meeting**

NBGC will be hosting their Annual Meeting and Conference at the Westin Hotel, Memphis, TN this year. **FSA will have an informational Booth and Employees will be available to discuss programs and answer questions.** Registration will begin December 14, 2022 and the annual meeting/conference will be held December 15-16, 2022. Please save the date! Information will be forthcoming. Please visit [NBGC's Website](#) for additional information.

### **Apr 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> - Arkansas Women in Agriculture Conference (AWIA)**

Arkansas Women in Agriculture is hosting the 2023 Conference on April 3 & 4, 2023. Please save the date! The conference will be held at the Hot Springs Convention Center, 134 Convention Blvd, Hot Springs, AR. **FSA will have an Information Booth and Employees will be available to discuss programs and answer questions.** Information will be forthcoming. Please visit: [AWIAs Website](#) for additional information.

## **USDA Farm Service Agency Offers Text Alerts to Producers**

*Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates*

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that farmers and ranchers in Arkansas now can receive notifications from their county office through text messages on their cell phone.

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Producers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Please contact your local FSA Office (visit [www.farmers.gov/service-locator](http://www.farmers.gov/service-locator)) if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the new text message option.

## **USDA to Mail Additional Pre-Filled Applications to Producers Impacted by 2020, 2021 Disasters**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced another installment (phase) in assistance to commodity and specialty crop producers impacted by natural disaster events in 2020 and 2021. More than 18,000 producers will soon receive new or updated pre-filled disaster applications to offset eligible crop losses. Approximately \$6.4 billion has already been distributed to 165,000 producers through USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

FSA will begin mailing pre-filled applications in late August to producers who have potentially eligible losses and:

- Received crop insurance indemnities for qualifying 2020 and 2021 disaster events after May 2, 2022.
- Received crop insurance indemnities associated with Nursery, Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) and Margin Protection (MP) policies.
- New primary policyholders not included in the initial insured producer Phase 1 mailing from May 25, 2022, because their claim records had not been filled.
- Certain 2020 prevent plant losses related to qualifying 2020 disaster events that had only been recorded in crop insurance records as related to 2019 adverse weather events and, as such, were not previously provided in applications sent earlier this year.

- New Substantial Beneficial Interest (SBI) records, including SBIs where tax identification numbers were corrected.

Producers are expected to receive assistance direct deposited into their bank account within three business days after they sign and return the pre-filled application to the FSA county office and the county office enters the application into the system.

Before applying any program payment factors or eligibility criteria, it is estimated that this next installment (phase) may generate about \$756 million in assistance.

### **Emergency Relief Payments to Date**

This emergency relief under ERP complements ERP assistance recently provided to more than 165,000 producers who had received crop insurance indemnities and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments for qualifying losses. USDA has processed more than 255,000 applications for ERP, and to date, has made approximately \$6.4 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

### **Phase Two**

The second phase of both ERP and ELRP will be aimed at filling gaps and provide assistance to producers who did not participate in or receive payments through the existing risk management programs that are being leveraged for phase one implementation. USDA will keep producers and stakeholders informed as program details are made available.

### **More Information**

In addition, on Aug. 18, 2022, USDA published a technical correction to the [Notice of Funds Availability](#) for ERP and ELRP to clarify how income from the sale of farm equipment and the provision of production inputs and services to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and farm operations are to be considered in the calculation of average adjusted gross farm income. Producers whose average adjusted gross farm income is at least 75% of the producer's average Adjusted Gross Income can gain access to a higher payment limitation.

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are authorized by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit [FSA's Emergency Relief webpage](#). A [new public-facing dashboard](#) on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty– specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard every Monday.



Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service 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 Announces Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for Specialty Crop Growers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 or 2023. USDA's new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements, which is part of USDA's broader effort to transform the food system to create a more level playing field for small and medium producers and a more balanced, equitable economy for everyone working in food and agriculture.

Specialty crop operations can apply for assistance for eligible expenses related to a 2022 food safety certificate issued on or after June 21, 2022, beginning June 27, 2022. USDA is delivering FSCSC to provide critical assistance for specialty crop operations, with an emphasis on equity in program delivery while building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions. Vilsack made the announcement from Hollis, N.H., where he toured a local, family-owned farm and highlighted USDA's efforts to help reduce costs for farmers and support local economies by providing significant funding to cut regulatory costs and increase market opportunities for farmers in New Hampshire and across the nation.

### Program Details

FSCSC will assist specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023. For each year, FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing their certification, as well as a portion of their related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2022 (issued on or after June 21, 2022) or 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.

- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety).

### Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2022 is June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date. FSA will issue payments at the time of application approval for 2022 and after the application period ends for 2023. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Producers can visit [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety) for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

## Noninsured Crop Coverage Helps Producers Manage Risks

The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps you manage risk through coverage for both crop losses and crop planting that was prevented due to natural disasters. The eligible or "noninsured" crops include agricultural commodities not covered by federal crop insurance.

*You must be enrolled in the program and have purchased coverage for the eligible crop in the crop year in which the loss incurred to receive program benefits following a qualifying natural disaster.*

### NAP Buy-Up Coverage Option

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. Buy-up levels of NAP coverage are available if the producer can show at least one year of previously successfully growing the crop for which coverage is being requested.

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.

Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

## **NAP Service Fees**

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.

## **NAP Enhancements for Qualified Military Veterans**

Qualified veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and premium reduction, if the NAP applicant meets certain eligibility criteria.

Beginning, limited resource and targeted underserved farmers or ranchers remain eligible for a waiver of NAP service fees and premium reduction when they file form CCC-860, *“Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification.”*

For NAP application, eligibility and related program information, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov/nap](https://fsa.usda.gov/nap).

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## **Reminders for FSA Direct and Guaranteed Borrowers with Real Estate Security**

Farm loan borrowers who have pledged real estate as security for their Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans are responsible for maintaining loan collateral. Borrowers must obtain prior consent or approval from FSA or the guaranteed lender for any transaction that affects real estate security. These transactions include, but are not limited to:

- Leases of any kind
- Easements of any kind
- Subordinations
- Partial releases
- Sales

Failure to meet or follow the requirements in the loan agreement, promissory note, and other security instruments could lead to nonmonetary default which could jeopardize your current and future loans.

It is critical that borrowers keep an open line of communication with their FSA loan staff or guaranteed lender when it comes to changes in their operation. For more information on borrower responsibilities, read [Your FSA Farm Loan Compass](#).

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## **Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has several loan programs to help you start or continue an agriculture production. Farm ownership and operating loans are available.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved applicants.

A targeted underserved applicant is one of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

## Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for September 2022	
90-Day Treasury Bill	2.000
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	4.125
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.375
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500
Emergency Loans	3.750
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	3.125
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.875
Commodity Loans 1996- Present	4.125

## County Committee Elections

# County Committee Elections 2022

**Jun. 15 2022**  
Beginning of nomination period.  
Forms available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

**Aug. 1 2022**  
Last day to file nomination forms at the local FSA county office.

**Nov. 7 2022**  
Ballots mailed to eligible voters.

**Dec. 5 2022**  
Last day to return voted ballots to the local FSA county office.

**Jan. 1 2023**  
Newly elected county committee members take office.

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

## Dates to Remember

Dates to Remember	
09/30/2022	ARC/PLC Successor Deadline
11/07/2022	COC Election Ballots mailed to Eligible Voters
11/21/2022	COC "Reminder to Vote" postcards mailed
12/05/2022	Final Date for COC Ballots to be returned to the County Office.
01/02/2022	Newly Elected COC Members take Office



## Arkansas

### Arkansas USDA

700 West Capitol Room 3416 Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

FSA Phone: 501-301-3000

FSA Fax: 855-652-2082

NRCS Phone: 501-301-3100  
NRCS Fax: 855-681-7044

*Please contact your local Office for questions specific to your operation or county.  
To find contact information for your local office visit one of the websites below.*

[www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov)

[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Arkansas/index](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Arkansas/index)

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)  
[www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov)

**FSA State Executive Director**  
*Doris Washington*

**NRCS State Conservationist**  
*Mike Sullivan*

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

*Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting/event should contact Rita Smith-Clay at 501-301-3200 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339*

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).

#### CONTACT US:

[Farm Service Agency](#)  
[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)  
[Risk Management Agency](#)  
[Service Center Locator](#)



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This email was sent to reginald.jackson@ar.usda.gov using GovDelivery Communications Cloud on behalf of: Farmers.gov · 1400 Independence Avenue SW · Washington, D.C. 20250

