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A Message from Oklahoma State Executive Director

Happy New Year!

It is the time of year full of resolutions, gratitude, and optimism. However, 2024 has been sent off with some extremely volatile weather.

We all hope and pray this does not happen, but it is best to be prepared. With the forecasted storm this weekend and the plummeting temperatures we ask for your assistance. If you do not have chattel inspections or veterinarian records as proof of your beginning cattle numbers, we encourage you to video and document your cattle as accurately as possible in order to establish your beginning cattle numbers. In addition, it is very important to keep daily logs of your cattle numbers. In the unfortunate circumstance of loss in the days ahead, please take a photo of your the animal-- if taken with a Smart Phone, there will be a date and time imbedded in the photo. This information will be crucial for eligibility in the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#).



I give thanks to the Oklahoma Farm Service Agency staff as they work diligently to deliver drought assistance and disaster assistance to all agricultural producers. I encourage you to look into some of the program opportunities we have available for Oklahoma Farmers and Ranchers.

Upcoming Deadlines:

- [Livestock Forage Program](#) for 2023 losses-- January 30, 2024
- [Emergency Livestock Assistance Program](#) for 2023 losses-- January 30, 2024

- [Acreage Reporting](#) (wheat and other fall-planted small grains, canola, and peaches)-- January 17, 2024
- [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, onions, potatoes, strawberries, tomatoes, turnips) -- January 31, 2024
- [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) for 2023 losses-- March 1, 2024

For additional information regarding these programs and to inquire on eligibility, I encourage you to [contact your county office](#) for more information.

Bundle up, folks!

Steve Kouplen

Keeping Livestock Inventory Records

Livestock inventory records are necessary in the event of a natural disaster, so remember to keep them updated.

When disasters strike, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) can help you if you've suffered excessive livestock death losses and grazing or feed losses due to eligible natural disasters.

To participate in livestock disaster assistance programs, you'll be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. For grazing or feed losses, you must submit a notice of loss to your local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent and should maintain documentation and receipts.

You should record all pertinent information regarding livestock inventory records including:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

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



Photo courtesy of Jessica Walls

USDA Helps Producers Prepare for and Recover from Severe Winter Weather

Winter storms create significant challenges and often result in catastrophic loss for agricultural producers, especially for those raising livestock, row crops and vulnerable crops like citrus. Despite every attempt to mitigate risk, your operation may suffer losses. As you prepare for the potential impacts of upcoming winter weather, know that USDA offers several programs to help with recovery.

Risk Management

For producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or the [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP), we want to remind you to report crop damage to your crop insurance agent or the local [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) office.

If you have crop insurance, contact your agency within 72 hours of discovering damage and be sure to follow up in writing within 15 days. If you have NAP coverage, file a Notice of Loss (also called Form CCC-576)

within 15 days of loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

Disaster Assistance

USDA also offers disaster assistance programs, which are especially important to livestock, fruit and vegetable, specialty and perennial crop producers.

First, the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) and [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died as a result of a qualifying natural disaster event— like these winter storms – or for loss of grazing acres, feed and forage. To participate in LIP and ELAP, you will need to file a Notice of Loss by the annual program payment application date. The LIP payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year and March 3, 2025, for 2024 program year losses. For ELAP, producers are required to complete and a notice of loss to their local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred.

Next, the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) provides cost share assistance to rehabilitate and replant tree, vines or shrubs loss experienced by orchards and nurseries. This complements NAP or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

For TAP, you will need to file a program application within 90 days of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes, or vines is apparent.

Documentation

It's critical to keep accurate records to document all losses following this devastating cold weather event. Livestock producers are advised to document beginning livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures prior to and after the loss.

Other common documentation options include:

- Purchase records
- Production records
- Vaccination records
- Bank or other loan documents
- Third-party certification

Other Programs

The [Emergency Conservation Program](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, damaged farmland or forests, and remove snow from feed stocks, water supplies, and feeding areas.

Additionally, FSA offers a variety of loans available including emergency loans that are triggered by disaster declarations and operating loans that can assist producers with credit needs. You can use these loans to replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs. Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

Meanwhile, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial resources through its [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help

recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. Assistance may also be available for emergency animal mortality disposal from natural disasters and other causes.

Additional Resources

Additional details – including payment calculations – can be found on our [NAP](#), [ELAP](#), [LIP](#), and [TAP](#) fact sheets. On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options.

While we never want to have to implement disaster programs, we are here to help. To inquire about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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.

Oklahoma Producers Encouraged to Apply for USDA's Continuous Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and landowners in STATE who are interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can now apply to re-enroll, if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by Oct. 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Additionally, producers with acres enrolled in Continuous CRP set to expire Sept. 30, 2024, can now offer acres for re-enrollment. A producer can both enroll new acres into Continuous CRP and re-enroll any acres expiring Sept. 30, 2024.

FSA water quality practices, such as riparian buffers, prairie strips, grassed waterways, and wetlands, will receive an additional 20% incentive. Buffer practices have a positive impact on water quality. Additionally, the Climate-Smart Practice Incentive launched in 2021 is also available in the Continuous signup.

NRCS Partners with the Oklahoma Local Agriculture Collaborative for an Annual Conference

The tenth annual Oklahoma Local Agriculture Summit is set to take place Feb. 28 - March 1, 2024, at the Edmond Conference Center located at 2833 Conference Dr, Edmond, OK 73034. The focus of the conference is to increase the availability of local food in Oklahoma communities and strengthen farmers markets and agritourism sites through education and networking opportunities.

The conference is facilitated by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, ONIE Project, Langston University, USDA, and key stakeholders from agricultural, community and public health agencies. Multiple in-depth workshops will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 28, including hands-on marketing training, a workshop sharing best farm practices, and an in-depth session on USDA resources. The full summit day with more than 20 breakout sessions is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 29 followed by the agritourism bus tour and innovative farm bus tour on Friday, March 1.

Most of the events associated with the summit are free to attend; however, registration is required for each event. Registration is open online at <https://oklac.org/oklas> and will close on Feb. 28 or once capacity is met.

The conference has five tracks addressing topics of special interest to farmers market managers, growers, agritourism producers, Christmas tree growers, and community support organizations. Topics will include

accepting SNAP/EBT, growing practices, marketing to consumers, and more. A meal on February 29 will be provided to all registrants.

There are more than 45 registered farmers markets and 400 agritourism producers in Oklahoma, providing quality and tasty local food and enjoyment to communities across the state. Information on Oklahoma's agritourism industry can be found at www.oklahomaagritourism.com.

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RMA's Livestock Roadshow has two virtual events scheduled for Jan. 8 and 17.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is hosting two virtual workshops in January for producers to learn about new and expanded livestock risk management products. The "Livestock Roadshow," hosted by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA), will highlight policy improvements based on feedback from America's livestock producers, part of the agency's broader outreach and education efforts. **The Livestock Roadshow virtual sessions are scheduled for January 8 and 17.** [Learn more, get login information and add to your calendar](#)



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