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From Darla's desk...

Greeting Park County farmers and ranchers!!!



A recent change to the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) no longer requires you to report losses within 30 days of the loss becoming apparent. You can now file a notice of loss any time after the eligible weather event and up to the application for payment deadline. However, you will still need to provide date(s) and eligible weather event(s), along with supporting documentation to those events and dates. If you experienced livestock losses and/or additional feed purchases, with or without snow removal expenses, in 2023, please make sure to contact the office to complete your notice of loss and application for payment by the applicable deadline.

Sheep producers, the wool rate is currently at \$0.40 per pound. The deadline to submit an application for a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) on your 2023 wool is January 31, 2024. Please contact the office if you have questions or need more information.

Important Dates to Remember:

January 30 - Deadline to submit 2023 ELAP applications

January 31 - Deadline to submit LDP applications for 2023 wool

March 1 - Deadline to submit 2023 LIP application for payment

March 15 - Deadline to change enrollment for ARC/PLC

Within 15 days of noticing crop loss - File NAP Notice of Loss

Farmers Can Now Enroll for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs the 2024 Crop Year



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\)](#) and [Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. Producers can enroll and make election changes for the 2024 crop year starting Dec. 18, 2023. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the *Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2022 Crop Year Payments

This fall, FSA issued payments totaling more than \$267 million to agricultural producers who enrolled in the 2022 ARC-CO option and the ARC ARC-IC option for covered commodities that triggered a payment. Payments through the PLC option did not trigger for the 2022 crop year.

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. These payments help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops. Payments for crops that may trigger for the 2023 crop year will be issued in the fall of 2024.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader USDA safety net that also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election can purchase Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Web-Based Decision Tools

Many universities offer web-based decision tools to help producers make informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Producers are encouraged to use the tool of their choice to support their ARC and PLC elections.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment [online with level 2 eAuth](#).

USDA Makes Producer- Friendly Change to 2023 Notice of Loss Requirements for Two Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived certain notice of loss requirements for 2023 for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). In an effort to streamline assistance to support access to critical 2023 natural disaster recovery assistance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is waiving the requirement to submit ELAP or LIP notices of loss within a pre-determined number of days for 2023. Instead, producers have the flexibility to submit 2023 notices of loss as soon as possible, once losses are realized, following a natural disaster event or no later than the established annual program application for payment deadlines for each program. FSA county committees are also being asked to re-evaluate 2023 ELAP and LIP late-filed notices of loss to determine if the waiver applies.



Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish

ELAP provides recovery assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish losses due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP covers grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres. ELAP also covers certain mortality losses for livestock including honeybees and farm-raised fish as well as honeybee hive losses. ELAP is designed to address losses not covered by other FSA disaster assistance programs.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for ELAP to file a notice of loss with FSA within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent for livestock and farm-raised fish and 15 calendar days for honeybees. Under this waiver, notices of loss are to be completed by the eligible producer and submitted to FSA no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred. Therefore, producers who incurred ELAP-eligible losses in 2023, will need to submit a notice of loss by Jan. 30, 2024.

Livestock Indemnity Program

LIP provides disaster recovery assistance to livestock owners and contract growers who experience livestock deaths, in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. LIP also helps livestock owners who must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from certain loss conditions.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for LIP to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent. Under this waiver, producers are still required to complete and submit the notice of loss to FSA no later than the annual program payment application date, which is 60 calendar days following the program year in which the loss occurred. The LIP payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year.

2023 Disapproved Applications

FSA county committees will review all notices of loss for both ELAP and LIP that were previously disapproved for the 2023 program year due to late filing and re-evaluate them to determine if the waiver applies. To receive ELAP and LIP benefits, producers will still need to file an application for payment by the established program deadline for the 2023 program year. Producers who are unsure about the status of their notice of loss or application for payment, should contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible.

Supporting Documentation

Accurate records and loss documentation are critical following disaster events and are required when filing notices of loss with FSA. Acceptable loss documentation includes:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented, if possible, by photographs or video records of ownership and losses.
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type, and weight - important to document prior to disposal.
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.
- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition.
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition.
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal.
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.
- Number of gallons of water transported to livestock due to water shortages.

More Information

The improvements to ELAP and LIP build on others made since 2021. This includes ELAP benefits for above normal costs for hauling feed and water to livestock and transporting livestock to other grazing acres during a qualifying drought. FSA also [expanded eligible livestock](#) under ELAP, LIP, and the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program, and increased the LIP payment rate for beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals and most recently beef calves over 800 pounds. Learn about USDA disaster assistance programs on [farmers.gov](#).

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine [disaster protection and recovery](#) program or loan options. For more information about FSA programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Save Money on Fuel with No-Till Farming

How much fuel can farmers save each year by transitioning from conventional tillage to continuous no-till? According to a [report from USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project \(CEAP\)](#), 3.6 gallons per acre is a reasonable estimate. With current off-road diesel fuel prices, this could translate into approximately \$17 per acre saved annually.

Nearly 87 percent of all cropland acres nationwide are farmed using some form of conservation tillage, where tillage is reduced for at least one crop within a given field. Continuous no-till accounts for 33 percent of this total.

[Improving soil health](#) is one known benefit of limiting disturbance. Farmers who minimize tillage across their operation may reduce soil erosion, maximize water infiltration, improve nutrient cycling, build organic matter, and strengthen resilience to disaster events or challenging growing conditions. Based on the latest data, they may also use significantly less fuel than with conventional tillage and reduce their associated carbon dioxide emissions.

According to CEAP, farmers who implement conservation tillage practices instead of continuous conventional tillage:

- Reduce potential nationwide fuel use by 763 million gallons of diesel equivalents each year, roughly the amount of energy used by 2.8 million households.
- Reduce potential associated emissions by 8.5 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalents each year, equivalent to removing nearly 1.7 million gasoline-powered passenger vehicles from the road.

How is this possible? Annually, farmers who practice continuous no-till use approximately 3.6 fewer gallons of fuel per acre than if they practiced continuous conventional tillage. Farmers who practice seasonal no-till –

farming without tilling for at least one crop – use approximately 3 fewer gallons of fuel per acre than they would with conventional tillage year-round.

Acre by acre, fuel saved is money saved. Let's assume an average off-road diesel fuel price of \$4.75 per gallon*. By transitioning from continuous conventional tillage to continuous no-till, a farmer can save just over \$17 per acre each year in fuel costs. A farmer who transitions from continuous conventional tillage to seasonal no-till can save more than \$14 per acre on fuel annually. These potential savings are significantly larger than with [CEAP's first fuel savings report](#), primarily due to the current price of diesel fuel.

The bottom line for farmers: Reducing tillage leads to fuel savings that deliver significant financial benefits while building healthier soils for a more resilient operation.

USDA Can Help

If you're a farmer interested in reducing tillage or pursuing other conservation efforts across your operation, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help.

- [This blog](#) offers five simple tips for farmers interested in trying no-till for the first time.
- [This 90-second video](#) provides a description of no-till and associated benefits according to a Delaware farmer.
- [This 23-minute video](#) follows five South Carolina farmers seeking to quantify the benefits of conservation practices that support soil health.
- [This webpage](#) details principles to improve soil health, including reduced tillage and complimentary conservation practices such as cover crops, crop rotations, and rotational grazing.

NRCS has local USDA Service Centers in nearly every county across the United States. You may [find contact information for your nearest Service Center here](#). NRCS staff are available to provide free, one-on-one assistance with a suite of practices to strengthen your operation, conserve natural resources, and boost your bottom line. [SMART nutrient management](#), for example, is important to consider with no-till and may help you [save money on fertilizer while improving water quality](#) – another win-win.

Visit the [new NRCS website](#) to learn more about conservation basics, getting assistance from NRCS, programs and initiatives, and resources to inform management decisions. Visit the [new CEAP webpage](#) for additional information about USDA's efforts to quantify the effects of conservation practices across croplands and other working lands.

USDA Now Accepting Applications for Farm Loans Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched an [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct

Loan application each year can now use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customers service, and expand credit access.



The online farm loan application replicates the support an applicant would receive when completing a loan application in person with an FSA Farm Loan Officer, while continuing to provide customers with one-on-one assistance as needed. This tool and other process improvements allow farmers and ranchers to submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete and withdrawn applications.

Through a personalized dashboard, borrowers can track the progress of their loan application. It can be accessed on [farmers.gov](#) or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at [farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool](#).

To use the online loan application tool, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#). For the initial stage, the online application tool is only available for producers who will be, or are currently, operating their farm as an individual. FSA is expanding the tools availability to married couples applying jointly and other legal entities in 2024.

Farm Loan Improvement Efforts

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate Farm Loan Program customer-facing business processes. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a Direct Loan application to FSA annually, and its 85,000 Direct Loan borrowers, FSA has made improvements this year, including:

- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool on farmers.gov](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the Direct Loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.

More Information

FSA continues to accept and review individual requests for assistance from borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their direct FSA loans or those who missed a recent installment or are unable to make their next scheduled installment. All requests for assistance must be received by Dec. 31, 2023. For more information, or to submit a request for assistance, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit [farmers.gov/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance](#).

The Inflation Reduction Act, a historic, once-in-a-generation investment and opportunity for agricultural communities, provided \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain FSA direct and guaranteed loans and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk. Since October 2022, USDA has provided approximately \$1.6 billion in immediate assistance to more than 27,000 financially distressed direct and guaranteed FSA loan borrowers.



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Next County Committee Meeting: February 7, 2024