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Message from the SED

USDA is seeking proposals for projects to survey, sample and measure the climate benefits of land enrolled in the following CRP practice types over time. The deadline for proposals is July 2, 2021. For more information on requirements, project deliverables, evaluation criteria and how to submit your proposal please visit farmers.gov. Also, there is a July 23, 2021 deadline to apply for CRP General signup 56. Additionally, applications will be accepted for CRP Grasslands from July 12 to August 20.

\$2 million in cooperative agreements is available for local governments to host Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CCFWR) pilot projects. The cooperative agreements support projects that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans and are part of USDA's broader efforts to support urban agriculture. Learn more about the Cooperative Agreements [here](#).

FSA is inviting you to participate in the #Plant2021 online campaign. Using this hashtag, many farmers and agricultural operations post photos and videos to their social media channels that document their planting work. It's a great way to share the story of agriculture in America with audiences not just nationwide, but worldwide. For information on how to participate in the

campaign with us, read our blog, and submit your photos and videos to SM.FP.Social@usda.gov.

For Service Center contact information, visit <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Sign in/Sign up for an Online Account



Farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers have online options to access USDA programs. Through USDA's new streamlined process, producers doing business **as an individual** can now register, track and manage their applications for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) on the secure and convenient farmers.gov. Producers doing business as an individual first need to sign up for the Level 2 eAuthentication access. Currently USDA eAuthentication does not have the mechanism to issue accounts to businesses, corporations, other entities or for anyone acting on behalf of another individual or entity.

- Step 1: Create an online account at eauth.usda.gov
- Step 2: Complete identity verification by either using the online self-service identity verification method or by completing the identity verification in-person at your USDA Service Center.
- Step 3: You're enrolled
- Step 4: Contact your local USDA Service Center to have your new Level 2 account linked with your USDA customer record
- Step 5: You're ready to Log In

Or go to your local USDA Service Center and our supportive staff will help you sign up for Level 2 Access right in the office! They will get you online so you can create an online account at farmers.gov/sign-in. You'll complete identity verification right on the spot. You're enrolled! Users with a secure Level 2 eAuthentication ID linked to their USDA customer record can apply for select USDA programs, view and print farm maps and farm records data. Enrolling is easy! Visit farmers.gov/sign-in to learn more.

To locate a service center near you or use online services not requiring eAuthentication access, visit farmers.gov. For technical assistance, call the eAuthentication help desk at 1-800-457-3642.

Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for County Committee Members

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The graphic features a dark blue header with the USDA logo and 'Farm Service Agency US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'. Below is a green banner with the title 'County Committee Elections 2021'. A row of seven photos shows diverse individuals. Below the photos is a timeline with five colored boxes (blue, dark blue, dark blue, green, green) containing dates and descriptions of election milestones. At the bottom, a small text line reads 'USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.'

Date	Event
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.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) began accepting nominations for county committee members on June 15. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for these members who make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2021 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 2, 2021.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program, and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serving on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Producers serving on FSA county committees play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the agency. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

More Information

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election. They should check with their local USDA Service Center to see if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form or an [FSA-669-A-3](#) for urban county committees. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 1, 2021. To find your local USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

USDA Encourages Completion of Cash Rents and Leases Survey

You may have received a *Cash Rents and Leases* survey from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). This survey provides the basis for estimates of the current year's cash rents paid for irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, and permanent pasture. Please complete your Cash Rents and Leases survey by June 21. This survey can be completed and returned by mail, over the phone, or at agcounts.usda.gov.

Information from this survey is used in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as an alternative soil rental rate prior to finalizing new rates each year. Survey responses from as many localities as possible help calculate more accurate rental rates. Completion of the survey ensures cash rental rates accurately represent your locality. Survey results will also give you a useful tool in negotiating your rental agreements, and financial planning for your agricultural operation.

In accordance with federal law, survey responses are kept confidential. Survey results will be available in aggregate form only to ensure that no individual producer or operation can be identified. NASS will publish the survey results on August 27 at quickstats.nass.usda.gov/.

If you have any questions about this survey, please call 888-424-7828, or visit: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Cash_Rents_by_County/index.php.

USDA Announces New Initiative to Quantify Climate Benefits of Conservation Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced an initiative to quantify the climate benefits of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts. This multi-year effort will enable USDA to better target CRP toward climate outcomes and improve existing models and conservation planning tools while supporting USDA's goal of putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change.

CRP Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation Projects

FSA has historically worked with partners to identify [Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation \(MAE\)](#) projects to quantify CRP environmental benefits to water quality and quantity, wildlife and rural economies. The agency will now invest \$10 million through this program to measure

and monitor the soil carbon sequestration and other climate and environmental benefits of conservation practices over the life of CRP contracts.

This effort will allow USDA to better target climate outcomes through CRP while gaining critical data to calibrate, validate and further improve quantification methods within existing models and tools. One model of focus is the Daily Century Model, or DayCent, which simulates the movement of carbon and nitrogen through agricultural systems and informs the [National Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#). Data will also be used to strengthen the [COMET-Farm](#) and [COMET-Planner](#) tools, which enable producers to evaluate potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reductions based on specific management scenarios.

Request for Proposals

USDA is seeking proposals for projects to survey, sample and measure the climate benefits of land enrolled in the following CRP practice types over time:

- Predominately Perennial grass with legumes and shrubs, depending on the practice
- Tree
- Wetland, including both mineral and organic soils and both floodplain and non-floodplain wetlands

A project can cover one or more of the above practice types and should be for a three- to five-year term, with the potential for renewal. Projects should be a minimum of \$1 million and not exceed \$9 million.

Applications are welcome from all types of organizations, including public, private and nonprofit institutions. Project proposals can be from a single entity or from a group of partners who coordinate efforts. Applications from or in partnership with Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU), Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCU) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) or organizations will be considered as part of the selection process.

The deadline for proposals is July 2, 2021. Visit the [request for proposals](#) for more information on requirements, project deliverables, evaluation criteria and how to submit your proposal. Visit [FSA's Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation page](#) for additional information on CRP MAEs.

Conservation Reserve Program

CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with an established track record of preserving topsoil, sequestering carbon, reducing nitrogen runoff and providing healthy habitat for wildlife.

In exchange for a yearly rental payment, agricultural producers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Land is enrolled in CRP for 10 to 15 years, with the option of re-enrollment. [FSA offers multiple CRP signups](#), including the general signup and continuous signup – both currently open – as well as CRP Grasslands and pilot programs focused on soil health and clean water.

In April, [USDA announced updates to CRP](#) including higher payment rates, new incentives for environmental practices and a more targeted focus on the program's role in climate change mitigation. This included a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive for CRP general and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP practices include establishment of trees and permanent grasses, development of wildlife habitat and wetland restoration. [Download our "What's New" fact sheet](#) to learn more about program updates.

USDA Expands Aquaculture Disaster Assistance in Arkansas to Include Fish Raised for Food

In response to catastrophic aquaculture losses due to major winter storms that hit states along the U.S. Gulf Coast including Arkansas in February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced a policy change that makes food fish and other aquatic species eligible for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#). Previously, only farm-raised game and bait fish were eligible for death loss ELAP benefits. Beginning June 1, eligible aquaculture producers can request ELAP assistance for 2021 losses. This policy change is for the 2021 and subsequent program years.

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary.

To be eligible, losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2021. For farm-raised fish and other aquatic species death losses only that occurred prior to June 1, 2021, FSA is waiving the requirement to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. An aquaculture producer will still need to be able to provide contemporaneous records upon request to document the eligible loss event and demonstrate the beginning and ending inventory. The deadline to file an application for payment for the 2021 program year is Jan. 31, 2022.

Producers must provide acreage reports for the surface acres of water where their aquatic species are raised. Acreage reports for 2021 must be filed by Sept. 30, 2022.

More Information

USDA offers a comprehensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs. On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine all program or loan options available for disaster recovery assistance. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in the county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the [AFIDA form](#) could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements. The data gained from these disclosures is used in the preparation of periodic reports to the President and Congress concerning the effect of such holdings upon family farms and rural communities.

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, contact your local FSA office or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Document the Drought: USDA U.S. Drought Monitor Offers Producers a Voice to Report Drought Impacts



The U.S. Drought Monitor includes a reporting feature that allows producers to report local drought impacts and conditions.

The report allows producers to:

- Provide a written description of drought impacts on livelihood, activities, etc.
- Select categories to show losses and gains as a result of the drought
- Report on the duration of drought event
- Select *Affected Places* – geographic areas ranging from an entire state to a small area within a state
- Submit images that document the drought and its impact
- Provide contact information (with the option to keep information confidential)

The reporting tool can be accessed at: droughtreporter.unl.edu/submitreport/

More information, including state specific drought impact maps, can be found at droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home.aspx

USDA seeks feedback from producers about 2021 crops, stocks, inventories, and values

During the next several weeks, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct two major mid-year surveys, the June Agricultural Survey and the June Area Survey. The agency will contact nearly 1,600 producers across Arkansas to determine crop acreage and stock levels as of June 1, 2021.

"The June Agricultural Survey and the June Area Survey are two of the most important and well-known surveys NASS conducts," explained Eugene Young, director of the NASS Delta Regional Office. "When growers respond to these surveys, they provide essential information

that help determine the expected acreage and supply of major commodities in the United States for the 2021 crop year. The results are used by farmers and ranchers, USDA, businesses, exporters, researchers, economists, policymakers, and others to inform a wide range of decisions.”

Growers can respond to the June Agricultural Survey online at accounts.usda.gov, by phone, or mail. They will be asked to provide information on planted and harvested acreage, including acreage for biotech crops and grain stocks. For the June Area Survey, agency representatives will interview farm and ranch operators in randomly selected segments over the phone. Growers will be asked to provide information on crop acreage, grain stocks, livestock inventory, land values, and value of sales.

“NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents, by keeping all individual information confidential and publishing the data in aggregate form only to ensure that no operation or producer can be identified,” said Young. “We recognize that this is a hectic time for farmers, but the information they provide helps U.S. agriculture remain viable and capable. I urge them to respond to these surveys and thank them for their cooperation.”

NASS will analyze the survey information and publish the results in a series of USDA reports, including the annual Acreage and quarterly Grain Stocks reports to be released June 30, 2021. Survey data also contribute to NASS’s monthly and annual Crop Production reports, the annual Small Grains Summary, annual Farms and Land in Farms and Land Values reports, various livestock reports, including Cattle, Sheep and Goats, and Hogs and Pigs, and USDA’s monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates.

These and all NASS reports are available at nass.usda.gov/Publications/. For more information, call the NASS Delta Regional Field Office at (800) 327-2970.

Farmers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a customer receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity. Electronic receipts for acreage reports began on Aug. 1, 2016.

A service is any information, program, or loan assistance provided whether through an office visit, email, fax, or letter.

Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for June 2021			
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.125		
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	1.875		
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.250		
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500	Dates to Remember 7/15/21 Acreage reporting spring seeded crops & other crops. (Note: crops insured under NAP may have an ear- lier acreage reporting date. Check with your local county office for veri- fication.	
Emergency Loans	2.875		
Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	0.875		
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	1.750		
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.125		

Arkansas FSA State Office

700 West Capitol Room 3416 Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
Phone: 501-301-3000 Fax: 855-652-2082

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

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

Acting State Director
Danny Hoots

Administrative Officer
Sharon Baker

Farm Loan Chief
Lori Lavender

Farm Program Chief
Terri McManus

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).