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

As the nation's preeminent private lands conservation agency for more than 85 years, we strive to provide the very best customer service to our producers and to our conservation partners. Working in conjunction with our Farm Production and Conservation sister agencies, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will continue to ensure we have the information technology, business operations and technical staff to enable us to offer timely and cost-effective solutions to our customers.

Our NRCS staff provides technical and conservation planning assistance to thousands of landowners across Arkansas. With the tools and resources provided through the Farm Bill, NRCS and all our conservation partners continue to make a major difference not only in soil

health, water quality, water quantity and wildlife habitat, but also in the lives of producers and the communities they work in.

Healthy land and waters is the foundation that ensures working farms become more productive, resilient to climate change and better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. When we target voluntary conservation efforts to the places most in need, we all see better results.

The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** is a program that aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands and grasslands.

NRCS offers two types of ACEP easements:

- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE): Helps restore, protect and enhance wetlands on eligible land.
- Agricultural Land Easements (ALE): Protects farmlands and grasslands by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land.

NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked and funded by funding cycle, which have state-specific application ranking dates. Applications received after the ranking date will automatically be considered during the next funding.

NRCS conservation easements have a tremendous footprint in the U.S. at over 5 million acres, or 58,000 square miles enrolled. In Arkansas, there are 5 easements with 5,800 acres enrolled. NRCS is the largest easement holder and steward in the nation. If you would like additional information on ACEP, contact your local USDA Service Center.

The **Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP)** is a state-driven, partnership and field-based program to build strong employee-producer relationships and increase NRCS employees' knowledge of production agriculture in their local areas.

- NRCS will match producer volunteers who are passionate about conservation and teaching with field employees who have fewer than three years of experience or who are new to an area.
- The producers will have an opportunity to mentor the employees through "on-the-land," hands-on learning to help them develop their knowledge.

The official rollout of CAMP occurred just as COVID-19 restrictions began. Despite the challenges in establishing in-person mentoring relationships, we have been creative in communicating internally and with our customers. Technologies such as Zoom and Teams meetings between employees and mentors have helped us push CAMP forward.

If you would be interested becoming a producer volunteer, contact Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (South Area) Kevin Cochran at kevin.cochran@usda.gov for additional information.

The purpose and passion for conservation is shared by many in our state. As we look ahead to the rest of the year, NRCS will continue to make improvements delivering outstanding customer assistance throughout Arkansas ***"Helping People Help the Land."***

Important Dates to Remember

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

NRCS and the Forest Service seeking the proposals for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership from partners by August 5 for fiscal year 2023. Landowners should contact their local NRCS and Forest Service office for more information.

AACD 2022 Annual Meeting

The Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts will be hosting their 2022 Annual Meeting August 11-12, 2022, at the Wyndham Hotel in North Little Rock. Contact Debbie Moreland at debbiepinreal@aol.com for additional information.

2nd Annual SFLR Joint Regional Conference

The Second Annual Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Joint Regional Virtual Conference hosted by Prairie View A&M University and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff will be held August 30 and August 31 at 9 a.m. each day. For more information, contact UAPB Small Farm Program KIITF Outreach Coordinator Kandi Williams at williamska@uapb.edu.

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

Greetings

Farm Service Agency's (FSA) is in the midst of the County Committee Election season. The nomination period is June 15 through August 1, 2022. Please contact your local FSA office today if you are interested in becoming involved. Also, check with your local USDA Service Center to see if your LAA is up for election this year. FSA encourages all eligible producers to nominate themselves and/or other eligible producers to run for office. Nomination forms (FSA-669A's) are available:

- at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections>, scroll down to the links under "Election Materials" and CLICK "2022 Nomination Form"
- by picking up FSA-669A at your local FSA office
- by calling your local office and requesting FSA-669A be sent to you.

Sign up and be counted in the 2022 Ag Census! Agriculture producers who did not receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture and do not receive other USDA surveys or censuses have until June 30 to sign up to receive the 2022 Census of Agriculture at nass.usda.gov/AgCensus. This once-every-five-years data collection begins this November.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to provide up to \$200 million in assistance for the new [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops](#) (FSCSC) program. 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. This program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements. The 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. Producers can visit farmers.gov/food-safety for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

Agricultural producers nationwide have already received more than \$4 billion through the [Emergency Relief Program](#) (ERP), representing nearly 67% of the more than \$6 billion projected to be paid through this phase of the program. Eligible producers in Arkansas have received \$112.5 Million in funding to date. Applications (pre-filled) were mailed in late May to producers with crop insurance who suffered losses due to natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. Commodity and specialty crop producers have until July 22 to complete applications.

In the last month, Arkansas has sent out 2 Stakeholder Notices regarding 5 triggering Disaster Events that have occurred between March and May of this year. Approximately 23 Counties were affected, some more than once. Various combinations of excessive rain, flash flooding,

flooding, hail, high winds, lightning, and tornados caused severe damage. Primary Counties and Contiguous Areas have been notified of the availability of Low-interest Physical Loss Loans for Producers. Visit www.farmers.gov to view the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). These tools can help determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

To find your local FSA office, please visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Visit www.farmers.gov to learn more about FSA Programs.

USDA Seeks Proposals for Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is asking for proposals for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership to improve forest health on public and private lands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service are seeking the proposals from partners by August 5 for fiscal year 2023.

Joint Chiefs' aligns with the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. Most recently, President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law codified the initiative, showing broad support for the effort because of its inclusion in the once-in-a-generation investment to improve infrastructure and rural communities. Fiscal year 2023 projects will build on the fiscal year 2022 investment of more than \$48 million on projects that will mitigate wildfire risk, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, restore forest ecosystems and ultimately contribute to USDA's efforts to combat climate change.

"The Joint Chiefs' will align with USDA's shared stewardship strategy by selecting projects that demonstrate a cross-boundary effort, work at the appropriate scale and have mutually defined priorities that support local communities," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "Partnerships at all levels – federal, state, Tribal and local—lead to well-developed, successful continued conservation with large scale impacts. Joint Chiefs' has a proven record of success, as further reflected in the program's inclusion in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."

"Joint Chiefs' funding is an invaluable tool to help confront the wildfire crisis across all lands," said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "Working with our partners through the Joint Chiefs' program is an important element that supports the agency's 10-year wildfire strategy by increasing the scale of our wildfire prevention efforts while restoring the health of forests, watersheds and habitats across the country."

"The health of our forests and our rural communities very often go hand in hand," said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist in Arkansas. "USDA works with other public agencies and thousands of private landowners through a range of programs and partnerships to decrease the threat of wildfire, restore forest habitat and increase economic and other opportunities for the families and businesses that make their homes near woodlands."

"The Joint Chiefs' partnership is one of the many ways USDA is working with local partners to help meet the increasing challenge of protecting communities, watersheds, forests and woodlands from the devastating and increasingly expensive impacts of wildfire," Sullivan said.

Opportunities to Collaborate

Joint Chiefs' project proposals are developed through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and partners. Past partners have included county, state, non-governmental, Tribal, utilities or private individual stakeholders. The collaboration process and partnerships will depend on the specific community needs of each project. Proposals are reviewed and vetted at multiple levels in the agencies based on local, state, Tribal and regional priorities.

NRCS and Forest Service national offices will evaluate the proposals and will announce the selected projects in late fall 2022.

Evaluation

- In selecting proposals, NRCS and the Forest Service will prioritize:
- Clear descriptions with goals and objectives, deliverables, timeline and measurable desired outcomes.
- Reduction of wildfire risk in a municipal watershed or the wildland-urban interface (WUI). *A municipal watershed is a watershed from which municipal water is provided by a utility. The WUI as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).*
- Development of the proposal through a collaborative process with participation from diverse stakeholders.
- Increase of forest workforce capacity or forest business infrastructure and development.
- Leveraging existing authorities and non-federal funding contributions from partners.
- Support of established state, Tribal and regional priorities. Proposals should describe how the eligible activities were prioritized across the landscape and the source of the state or regional priorities (e.g., fireshed analysis, wildfire risk assessment, state technical committee watershed prioritization, Endangered Species Act recovery plan, state wildlife action plan, etc.).
- Alignment with USDA priorities and the Justice40 initiative, including benefits to historically underserved communities and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Partner participation in proposal development or project implementation.
- Coordination (i.e., pre-planning) with individual landowners within the proposal footprint.
- The geographic distribution of individual project activities across the landscape demonstrates a focus on resource conditions and a balance between land ownerships.

Education and outreach to local communities about the project.

More Information

USDA has invested more than \$349 million across 110 projects in nine years through Joint Chiefs' projects, which focus on areas where public forests and grasslands intersect with privately-owned lands. Since 2014, these projects have delivered important forest and rangeland funding to 41 states and Puerto Rico. NRCS and the Forest Service also collaborates and coordinates to advance shared priorities through other programs and funding mechanisms and will continue to build on this collaboration to respond to disasters, address climate change, and advance equity.

Landowners should contact their local [NRCS](#) and [Forest Service](#) office for more information.

Making Your Land More Resilient to Drought

Many farmers and ranchers had a very difficult year in 2021 due to drought. Those in other areas of the country were spared from the worst of the drought this time but may not be as lucky in future years. So, as you're planning for 2022 production, you may want to consider some conservation practices that can help make your land and livestock more resilient to drought and help your bottom line.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service can help you conserve water and build resilience to drought, through conservation practices that improve irrigation efficiency, boost soil health, and manage grazing lands.

Irrigation Efficiency

USDA helps you improve your irrigation efficiency to ensure each drop of water is used wisely. Saving water on your farm can help during drought and can offset rising water costs; reduce expenditures for energy, chemicals, and labor; and enhance revenues through higher crop yields and improved crop quality. Funded conservation practices include conversion to more efficient irrigation systems, such as micro-irrigation or subsurface drip irrigation, installation of irrigation pipeline, irrigation water management, structures for water control, and flow meters. Tools like drip irrigation, which provides water precisely where and when it's needed, can achieve greater precision with flow meters and soil moisture sensors.

Soil Health

In addition, soil health conservation practices, such as reduced- or no-till, cover crops, mulching and residue management can help to make your soil, and the plants you grow or animals you raise, healthier. Healthier soil can absorb and retain more water for longer periods of time, making your farm or ranch more resilient to drought. Using soil health practices, you can conserve water by increasing your soil's water-holding capacity and use conservation tillage to keep the ground covered, reducing water loss through transpiration and evaporation.

And soil health practices increase organic matter, and each pound of organic matter can hold up to 20 pounds of water. Every 1% increase in organic matter results in as much as 25,000 gallons of soil water per acre. Each 1% increase in organic matter can also provide up to 30 pounds of more available nitrogen per acre. That means less money and time spent on inputs like water and fertilizer, which make your operation more profitable.

Rotational/Prescribed Grazing, Water Sources for Livestock

Drought also impacts grazing lands, and NRCS works with you to increase the resilience of your livestock operation. Ranchers can adapt to dry conditions in two main ways: increasing the availability and suitability of forage and ensuring that cattle have an adequate and reliable source of water. For forage, rotational or prescribed grazing (rotating cattle among pastures) can relieve pressure on stressed vegetation and ensure a more consistent supply of forage for animals. NRCS conservationists can also work with you to plant more drought-tolerant forage species, plants best suited to local soils and conditions. For reliable sources of water, NRCS can help you with installing watering facilities, water wells, or water pipeline for livestock. Having available forage and water for livestock can make a big difference in difficult drought conditions.

NRCS is here for you, helping you recover from drought and prepare for the next one. For more information on drought recovery assistance at <https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery/drought#recovery>. For more information on conservation practices to make your operation more resilient to drought in future years, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local USDA Field Service Center.

USDA Reminds Historically Underserved Producers of Advance Payment Option

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

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

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

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

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

Conservation at Work Video Series

A video series from NRCS and farmers.gov, *Conservation at Work*, presents short and easy to understand videos about popular conservation practices. These videos feature producers explaining how an individual practice helps their land and why they are using it.

The videos shine the spotlight on farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners from across the U.S. who explain why they've implemented the conservation practices and how they work on their land. They also provide insight into how each practice is helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money. Several of these video spotlights include producers from Arkansas who share their own conservation stories, and how practices are helping them protect and improve resources and save time and money.

1. Conservation at Work video featuring DeValls Bluff row crop producers the Seidenstrickers utilizing Irrigation Reservoirs.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm0v0DVhVnl&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB&index=12>
2. Conservation at Work Videos featuring Hector poultry producer Terry Small utilizing Animal Mortality Facility.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZO-CK-DUkM&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB&index=1>
3. Conservation at Work Videos featuring Sheridan livestock producer Kenny Sites utilizing Forage and Biomass Planting.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT-4BvrPGil&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB&index=6>
4. Conservation at Work Videos featuring Sheridan livestock producer Kenny Sites utilizing Prescribed Grazing.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOiyO31rOis&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB&index=19>

5. Conservation at Work Videos featuring DeValls Bluff row crop producers the Seidenstrickers utilizing Precision Land Forming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHs8xI51mpA&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB&index=20>

We've got videos showcasing high tunnels, no-till, cover crops, prescribed grazing, and many more.

Check out the *Conservation at Work* video series at farmers.gov/conserve/conservationatwork. To view all videos, watch the [YouTube playlist](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB) at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PL4J8PxoprGZ2F23YzTa3QjSDfj-IK2ZB>.

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.

July 14th – The Chickamauga Nation USDA Outreach Virtual Meeting The Chickamauga Nation is hosting an in-person, USDA Outreach Meeting, on Thursday, July 14, 2022, from 5:45pm – 7:45pm. The meeting will include presentations from FSA, NASS, and NRCS. **Paige Yarber, Sebastian/Crawford/Scott County Executive Director, will present on FSA Programs.** The meeting will be held at the Sebastian County Extension Service Center - (Chaffee Crossing), 7600 Taylor Avenue, Barling, Arkansas. The meeting is free to attend. Please contact The Chickamauga Nation at 479-522-7985 or www.ChickamaugaNation.com for additional information.

Aug 11th – 12th – Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) 2022 Annual Meeting

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) is hosting their 2022 Annual Meeting in North Little Rock, Arkansas. **Rhonda O'Guinn, State Outreach Coordinator, will manage the FSA Information Booth.** Please visit to obtain information on FSA Farm Programs and Farm Loan Programs. The Conference will be held August 11-12, 2022 at the Wyndham Hotel. For registration information or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Moreland at debbiepinreal@aol.com or call (501) 425-2891.

Producers Have Until Aug. 1 to Submit FSA County Committee Nominations

Farmers and ranchers have until Aug. 1, 2022, to nominate candidates to serve on the County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) accepts nominations each year in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAAs) for individuals to serve on these locally led committees.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program, and reside in the LAA 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.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. 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.

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. Urban farmers should use 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. 7, 2022.

Ask USDA available to answer questions about FSA programs

Ask USDA is now available as a tool for FSA customers to ask questions about FSA programs and services.

Ask USDA, available at ask.usda.gov is similar to AskFSA, which was decommissioned Sept. 21, but it also provides information for all USDA programs. Ask USDA allows USDA customers to search for and read answers about FSA programs and services in the same location as they read about other USDA programs and services.

Customers are able to submit questions through email, chat, and phone if they need more information. This improved customer service approach provides a one-stop shopping experience that covers all of USDA's many programs.

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.
- Training

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.

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 for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

USDA Has Issued More Than \$4 Billion in Emergency Relief Program Payments to Date

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that to date, agricultural producers have already received more than \$4 billion through the [Emergency Relief Program](#) (ERP), representing approximately 67% of the more than \$6 billion projected to be paid through this first phase of the program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) mailed out pre-filled applications in late May to producers with crop insurance who suffered losses due to natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. Commodity and specialty crop producers have until July 22 to complete applications.

USDA is implementing ERP and ELRP in two phases, with the first phase utilizing existing claim data to provide relief expediently, and the second phase focusing on ensuring producers not covered by other programs receive assistance. For phase one, USDA used crop insurance and [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) claim data.

Both ERP and the previously announced Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) are funded 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, of which \$750 million is committed to livestock producers who experienced losses to drought or wildfire in calendar

year 2021. Eligible livestock producers received ELRP payments totaling more than \$590 million since the program was rolled out in late March.

Pre-Filled Applications

Eligible producers with eligible crop insurance claims have received pre-filled applications, which included eligibility requirements and payment calculations. Producers received a separate application form for each program year in which they experienced an eligible loss.

Producers should check with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at their local [USDA Service Center](#) to confirm eligibility and to ensure that all required farm program participation, adjusted gross income and conservation compliance forms are on file. Producers who have previously participated in FSA programs likely have these required forms already on file.

ERP provisions allow for a higher payment percentage for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged and military veteran producers. To qualify for the higher payment rate, individuals must have a Form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* on file.

To receive a payment, producers must complete and submit their forms by the July 22 deadline. Once the completed ERP application for payment is submitted to and signed by the FSA, producers enrolled in direct deposit should look for their payment within three business days.

Additional Assistance through Phase One

FSA will be sending pre-filled applications for about 9,000 eligible producers with NAP coverage in mid-July.

The Federal crop insurance data used to populate ERP phase one pre-filled applications included claim data on file with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) as of May 2, 2022. At that time, claim data for the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO), Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX), Margin Protection Plan (MP) or Area Risk Protection Insurance (ARPI) were not complete, so crop/units including these coverage options were not included in the pre-filled ERP application form. In late summer 2022, updated claim information will be used to generate a second pre-filled application for those crop/units with eligible losses on file with RMA not included in the first mailing.

More Information

ERP covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to a qualifying natural disaster event in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligible crops include all crops for which crop insurance or NAP coverage was available, except for crops intended for grazing. Qualifying natural disaster events include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

All producers who receive ERP phase one payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or NAP coverage where crop insurance is not available for the next two available crop years.

Producers should contact their local [Service Center](#) if they have questions. Additionally, other resources include:

- [ERP fact sheet](#)
- [ERP Webpage](#)
- ["Top 6 Emergency Relief Program Checklist" blog on farmers.gov](#)
- [May 16, 2022, news release](#)

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

USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with the Name County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch and its intended uses. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

July 15, 2022, deadline.

How to File a Report

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended use of the crop.
- Number of acres of the crop.
- Map with approximate boundaries for the crop.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other information as required.

Acreage Reporting Details

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If crops are covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, acreage reports should be submitted by the applicable state, county, or crop-specific reporting deadline or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to because of a natural disaster.

Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

FSA offers continuous certification for perennial forage. This means after perennial forage is reported once and the producer elects continuous certification, the certification remains in effect until a change is made. Check with FSA at the local USDA Service Center for more information on continuous certification.

New Option to View, Print and Label Maps on Farmers.gov

Producers with an eAuth account linked to their USDA customer record can now access their FSA farm records, maps and common land units by logging into farmers.gov. A new feature will allow producers to export field boundaries as shapefiles and import and view other shapefiles, such as precision agriculture boundaries. This will allow producers to view, print and label their own maps for acreage reporting purposes.

Producers who have authority to act on behalf of another customer as a grantee via form FSA-211 Power of Attorney, Business Partner Signature Authority, along with other signature types, or as a member of a business can now access information in the farmers.gov portal.

Producers can learn how to use the farmers.gov Farm Records Mapping functionality with this [fact sheet](#) and these video tutorials._

More Information

For questions, please contact the Local County FSA office.

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](#).

FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Direct Farm Ownership loans](#) can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a [Direct Farm Ownership Microloan](#) option for smaller financial needs up to \$50,000.

Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is \$600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your local USDA Service Center at or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for July 2022	
90-Day Treasury Bill	0.875
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	3.875
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	4.125
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500
Emergency Loans	3.750
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 Years)	3.000
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	3.125
Commodity Loans 1996- Present	3.375

Dates to Remember	
06/15/2022	County Committee (COC) Election Nomination Period
07/15/2022	Acreage reporting spring seeded crops & other crops (Note: crops insured under NAP may have an earlier acreage reporting date. Check with local county office for verification).
08/01/2022	Last date to file COC Nomination or for a Nomination to be postmarked.
08/01/2022	Last day to request a reconstitution to be effective for 2022
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 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
www.fsa.usda.gov
www.ar.fsa.usda.gov
www.nrcs.usda.gov
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

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).