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

This month we are celebrating our country's newest federal holiday. [Juneteenth](#) is one of our country's oldest celebrations and is the oldest known commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth is a time to celebrate freedom, liberation, and progress, and this year's United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Juneteenth Theme, "Jubilee: History, Celebration, & Tradition," invites us to acknowledge the importance of the promise of equality in our nation's history while reflecting on the value of our freedom.

Also this month USDA is celebrating LGBTQI+ Pride Month. This year's USDA theme is *Changing the Landscape*, a theme that speaks to both the work we do through our programs and services at USDA and how our employees and customers move forward

regarding equity. The LGBTQI+ community is represented throughout FSA, FPAC, the Department, and the producers we serve.

Nominations are being sought for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations will be open to public from May 15, 2023, to July 15, 2023. The 12-member Committee is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country. Nomination packages must be submitted by email to [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov) or postmarked by July 15, 2023. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4627-S, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations.

County Committee Members make important decisions regarding how federal farm programs are administered locally. FSA is now accepting nominations for county committee members for the 2023 election year. Additionally, a new GIS tool is being unveiled to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members. All nomination forms must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by August 1, 2023. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

FSA will cover up to 75% of the costs associated with organic certification, up to \$750 per category, through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and handlers to apply for OCCSP by October 31, 2023, for expenses incurred from October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023. To apply, Arkansas producers and handlers should contact their local FSA office [USDA Service Center](#). As part of completing the OCCSP application, producers and handlers will need to provide documentation of their organic certification and eligible expenses. Organic producers and handlers may also apply for OCCSP through participating state departments of agriculture. Additional details can be found on the [OCCSP](#) webpage.

FSA has provided additional flexibilities and further enhanced disaster recovery assistance provided by the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#), [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) and [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#) in response to needs expressed by livestock producers who have experienced significant feed, forage and animal losses from natural disasters. These livestock disaster program policy enhancements include an extended June 2, 2023 deadline to submit notices of loss and applications for payment for 2022 losses.

Agricultural producers and landowners in Arkansas interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments can find many possibilities through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP). This option offers conservation benefits similar to others, like General and Grassland CRP, but also offers unique flexibility and several program choices. There are several enrollment options within [Continuous CRP](#), including:

- [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#)
- [Highly Erodible Lands Initiative \(HELI\)](#)
- [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#)

- [Farmable Wetlands Program](#)

To sign up, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

FSA is accepting more than 1 million acres in this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup. This is one of several signups that is being held for this program. The results for CRP General signup reflect the continued importance of CRP as a tool to help producers invest in the long-term health, sustainability, and profitability of their land and resources. The signup's results include 3665 acres in Arkansas. To learn more, producers may contact their local [USDA Service Center](#).

NOTE: Producers may prepare maps for acreage reporting as well as manage farm loans and view other farm records data and customer information by [logging into their farmers.gov account](#). If you don't have an account, [sign up today](#).

Again, for more information on USDA and FSA, contact your [local USDA service center](#) or visit [www.farmers.gov](#).

Until next time...

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

We're here to provide one-on-one support to our customers at our 61 USDA Service Centers statewide. NRCS staff can help guide farmers to the best USDA assistance based on their conservation goals.

Farmers who work with us at their local USDA Service Center can:

- Verify eligibility for USDA programs
- Discuss their business and conservation goals
- Create a conservation plan
- Learn how to meet conservation compliance provisions

Additionally, NRCS launched online tools through [www.farmers.gov](#) that increased the efficiency, effectiveness and delivery of crucial programs.

### Urban Agriculture

NRCS is working to support urban agriculture as it plays an important role in growing not only fresh, healthy food, often where grocery stores are scarce, but also providing jobs, responding to climate change and increasing green spaces.

Urban agriculture includes cultivating, processing and distributing agricultural products in urban and suburban areas. Community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic facilities, and vertical production are all examples of urban agriculture.

NRCS serves all agriculture – large to small, conventional to organic, rural to urban. As Arkansas agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it. By bringing technical and financial assistance, cultivation and opportunity, to both rural and urban areas, we can address many conservation needs.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to Urban growers in:

- **Soil Health** - As experts in soil health, NRCS conservationists can advise urban growers on things like what cover crops to grow, using farmers' soil tests and our soil surveys.
- **Irrigation and Water Conservation** - We can help urban growers conserve water, by assisting with conservation practices including drip irrigation.
- **Weeds and Pests** - We can assist with pest and weed management by planting buffers for beneficial insects, through mulching, using cover crops and various other conservation practices.
- **High Tunnels** – NRCS can provide financial assistance for high tunnels, used to extend the growing season and to protect plants from harsh weather, air pollution and pests. By making local produce available for more months in the year, fewer resources are used to transport food to plates.

Starting an urban farm comes with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. NRCS can assist with the challenges of conservation and support urban farmers in their efforts to achieve local, healthy, sustainable food and economic opportunity for their communities. To learn more, start by contacting your local NRCS Service Center.

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## 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.

**Jul 6<sup>th</sup> – Cross County Tornado Disaster Recovery Outreach Meeting** USDA-Rural Development (RD) and USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) is hosting a Tornado Disaster Recovery meeting in Cross County, Arkansas. **RD and FSA staff will present and answer questions regarding financial assistance programs to help homeowners and ag producers with long-term disaster recovery.** This in-person meeting will be held Thursday, July 6, 2023 at Wynne City Hall at 6:00pm. For Additional Information, please contact RD Arkansas State Office at 501.301.3200 and/or FSA Arkansas State Office at 501.301.3000.

**Jul 21<sup>st</sup> – University of Arkansas Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit**

The University of Arkansas is hosting its annual Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit July 18 – 21, 2023. **Rhonda O'Guinn, Outreach Coordinator, will present on FSA Youth Loans, 1994 Tribal Scholars Program, Internships, and Career Opportunities.** The USDA-FSA Session will be held Friday, July 21, 2023 at 1:00pm. Campus location will be forthcoming. For additional information, please visit [Native Youth Programs | Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative](#).

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## Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members for elections that will occur later this year. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is unveiling a new GIS tool to make it easier for producers to participate in the nomination and election processes for county committee members, who make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally.

All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2023.

Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and they may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a new GIS locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program; and
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

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 serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. 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.

### More Information

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 Nomination forms and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 6, 2023.

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## USDA Extends Application Deadline for Revenue Loss Programs to July 14

USDA is extending the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase Two and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) to July 14, 2023, to give producers more time to apply for assistance. The original deadline was June 2. Additionally, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to agricultural producers and provide assistance in completing an ERP Phase Two application. The extended deadline will give producers more time to work with these partner organizations and apply for assistance. **Cooperative Agreements for ERP Phase Two Application Assistance** Through cooperative agreements with FSA, the following organizations are providing free assistance to producers across the United States and territories.

- [Alabama State Association of Cooperatives](#)
- [Farmers Legal Action Group, INC.](#)
- [Flower Hill Institute](#)

- [Intertribal Agriculture Council, Inc](#)
- [North South Institute](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside II](#)
- [Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA](#)
- [Rural Coalition](#)
- [Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO](#)

Depending on a producer's location, these nine partners can provide assistance either by phone or through online meeting software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

There is never a charge for technical assistance provided by FSA employees or cooperative agreement recipients. These organizations will assist producers with completing the application and any follow-up future insurance coverage requirements. Producers who receive ERP payments are statutorily required to purchase crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage for the next two available crop years. These organizations will not collect producer records, complete or sign the application form, or act on the producer's behalf in any way throughout this process.

Find more information on FSA cooperative agreements and contact information for the nine organizations please visit [fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index](https://fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index).

**PARP Application Assistance** USDA will host a webinar that focus on completing the PARP application form on June 8, 2023 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. eastern with members of the National Farm Income Tax Extension Committee. Register [here](#).

**Eligibility** To be eligible for ERP Phase Two, producers must have suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue in 2020 or 2021 due to necessary expenses related to losses of eligible crops from a qualifying natural disaster event. Assistance will be primarily to producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or NAP, since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One.

To be eligible for PARP, an agricultural producer must have been in the business of farming during at least part of the 2020 calendar year and had a 15% or greater decrease in allowable gross revenue for the 2020 calendar year, as compared to a baseline year.

FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) and [PARP tool](#) that can help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue for each respective program.

Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two and PARP assistance. Producers should also keep in mind that July 15 is a major deadline to complete acreage reports for most crops. FSA encourages producers to complete the ERP Phase Two application, PARP application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

**More Information** For more information, view the [ERP Phase Two Fact Sheet](#), [PARP Fact Sheet](#), the [ERP Phase Two-PARP Comparison Fact Sheet](#), [ERP Phase Two application video tutorial](#), [PARP application video tutorial](#), [myth-buster blog](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

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## Maintaining ARC/PLC Acreage



If you're enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, you must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, you agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If you fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on your farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate your contract for the program year.

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## USDA Reminds Arkansas Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Arkansas who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after planting should make an appointment with their U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) service center 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.

### How to File a Report

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Arkansas: July 15, 2023

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your local FSA office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

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**

Producers can make an appointment to report acres by contacting their local USDA Service Center.

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## **Communication is Key in Lending**

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be successful. FSA staff will provide guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial credit. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

If a farm loan borrower can't make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.



For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your Local County USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Loans for Targeted Underserved Producers

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

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

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

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

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

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## Arkansas NRCS Solicits Conservation Innovation Grant Proposals

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced approximately \$300,000 in funding is available through the state Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies within Arkansas.

State, tribal, and local governmental entities; non-governmental organizations; and individuals may apply. Project proposals must be submitted by June 22, 2023, and should demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource concern. Project results are expected to improve and create conservation technologies, management systems and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems).

CIG, a component of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It does not fund research projects. CIG is an effort to address some of the state's most pressing natural resource conservation needs.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, Arkansas NRCS will consider offering grants in the following areas: nutrient and sediment reduction in impaired watersheds; irrigation; and soil health. Applications should be for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years.

At least 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG in FY 2023 is set aside for proposals from Historically Underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, and community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities.

Selected applicants may receive grants up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Individual grant awards may not exceed \$100,000 in FY 2024. Applicants must provide non-federal matching funds of at least 50 percent of the project cost. With the non-federal matching funds, a minimum of 25 percent must be from cash contributions; the remaining 25 percent may come from in-kind contributions.

**The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found at: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). The announcement number is USDA-NRCS-AR-CIG-23-NOFO0001298. Applications must be entered into grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. on June 22, 2023. No applications will be accepted by mail.**

For more information on CIG contact Lori Barker, state CIG program manager, at (870) 523-8986 or [lori.barker@ar.usda.gov](mailto:lori.barker@ar.usda.gov). The request for proposals and related forms are located at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

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## **USDA NRCS Announces Nearly \$15 Million Available to Protect and Improve Migratory Bird Habitat**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that it is now accepting applications from agricultural producers for enrollment in a special Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) sign-up. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is investing nearly \$15 million to support agricultural producers, through the EQIP - Migratory Bird Resurgence Initiative (MBRI), helping to protect and improve natural resources and habitat for migratory birds and other avian species in the Prairie Pothole Region and targeted areas of the Pacific, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. NRCS in Arkansas will provide up to \$4 million in financial assistance in fiscal year 2023 for MBRI.

"Creating habitat on private lands in Arkansas's flyways is vital in sustaining our migratory bird populations as well as building climate resiliency and carbon stewardship on working lands," said NRCS Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. "Providing migratory birds with more areas to nest and additional food and resting areas for overwintering will lead to improved habitat that not only benefits wildlife but will result in greater natural resource conservation."

In addition to Arkansas, assistance is available in California, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Texas.

Interested producers should submit applications for EQIP - MBRI financial assistance by July 14, 2023, to receive funding this year.

Applications for EQIP financial assistance are accepted throughout the year. Specific program deadlines are set for ranking and funding opportunities within each state. To review ranking dates in your state, visit the [NRCS Ranking Dates](#) webpage.

For more information, contact NRCS at your local USDA Service Center.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate-smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](http://usda.gov).

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# **Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of \$500 Million for Improved Regional Conservation Partnership Program to Better Support Partners, Producers as Part of Investing in America Agenda.**

The Biden-Harris Administration recently announced the availability of \$500 million in funding to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Increased funding for fiscal year 2023 is made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, and this year's funding opportunity reflects a concerted effort to streamline and simplify the program. Program improvements will enable USDA to efficiently implement the \$4.95 billion in Inflation Reduction Act funding for the program while improving the experience for partners, agricultural producers, and employees.

"The Regional Conservation Partnership Program leverages the collective power and resources of public-private partnerships to deliver meaningful results for agriculture and conservation," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Thanks to the additional resources unlocked by the Inflation Reduction Act, as well as the improvements being made to the program, more farmers, ranchers, and foresters than ever before will be able to access and deploy conservation and climate-smart practices that will combat the climate crisis, enhance water and soil quality, protect vulnerable wildlife habitat and more."

Arkansas has a successful history of RCPP, boasting 20 approved RCPP projects since the program inception in 2014. These projects have brought to the State a combined federal investment of more than \$84 million leveraged by \$77 million in non federal resources.

"We want to see this success continue and have staff available to meet with interested partners to discuss new RCPP project ideas," said Arkansas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan.

## **RCPP Improvement Effort**

The improvements included in this year's RCPP funding opportunity are part of an ongoing effort to streamline NRCS conservation programs and efficiently implement the Inflation Reduction Act. The RCPP improvement effort identified problems and central issues associated with the program and is working to develop meaningful and actionable improvements.

Based on partner listening sessions and employee and partner surveys, NRCS identified seven key focus areas for improvement, each with a dedicated team working to address identified issues and provide recommendations:

1. Simplifying and Reducing the Number of Agreements
2. Reducing Lengthy RCPP Easement Transactions
3. Improving the RCPP Portal
4. Consistent Guidance and Training for Employees and Partners

5. Simplifying the Technical Assistance Structure
6. Improving the Conservation Desktop
7. Simplifying the Partner Reimbursement Process

For more information about RCPP and a list of frequently asked questions, visit the [NRCS website](#).

### **Notice of Funding Opportunity**

The application period is now open for RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, the lead partner must work directly with agricultural producers to support the development of new conservation structures and approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic.

This RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) showcases a number of program improvements including the increase of project funding ceilings, the simplification of financial assistance and technical assistance structures, a stronger emphasis on locally led conservation, and easement deed flexibilities.

Up to \$500 million will be available through the RCPP for fiscal year 2023, of which up to \$50 million will prioritize AFAs with Indian Tribes.

Projects selected under this NOFO may be awarded funding through either the Inflation Reduction Act or Farm Bill 2018. Applications for RCPP climate-related projects will receive priority consideration for Inflation Reduction Act funding. The 2023 RCPP priorities are climate-smart agriculture, urban agriculture and projects and, as a Justice40 covered program, projects that serve underserved farmers and ranchers.

NRCS will accept applications now through August 18, 2023, via the [RCPP portal](#). Please note that to request access to the portal, you must have a level Two verified eAuthentication account with USDA. This can be obtained by following the instructions on the [USDA eAuthentication page](#).

### **Webinar for Interested Applicants**

NRCS encourages interested applicants to participate in an upcoming webinar that will provide general information about this funding announcement. The webinar will take place on June 7, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Central Time. Join via the links posted on the [RCPP How to Apply](#) website. Additional webinars may be announced as needed.

For additional information on RCPP, contact Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships Amanda Mathis at [amanda.mathis@usda.gov](mailto:amanda.mathis@usda.gov).

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## **USDA Expands Margin Protection for Corn and Soybean Farmers**

USDA is expanding its [Margin Protection insurance plan](#), adding more than a thousand counties to the insurance option that provides coverage against an unexpected decrease in operating margin for corn and soybean producers. This expansion, which is in direct response to growing interest among producers, will be available by June 30, 2023. Interested producers will need to purchase their coverage by Sept. 30, 2023, to be eligible for the 2024 crop year.

Margin Protection, first implemented for the 2016 crop year, protects against decreases in margin caused by reduced county yields, reduced commodity prices, increased price of certain inputs or any combination of these issues. It is area-based, using county-level estimates of average revenue and input costs to establish the amount of coverage and indemnity payments.

RMA's expansion of the Margin Protection plan will add 1,255 counties for soybeans and 1,729 counties for corn. This will add coverage in 22 states for soybeans with 34 states being covered in total. It will also make Margin Protection available for corn in the contiguous United States ([see maps](#)). The plan is available in select counties for rice (Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas), and wheat (Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

In the 2022 crop year, there were 1.7 million acres of corn and 1 million acres of soybeans insured under the Margin Protection insurance plan.

Margin Protection can be purchased by itself, or in conjunction with a Yield Protection or Revenue Protection policy purchased from the same Approved Insurance Provider that issued the Margin Protection policy. Margin Protection cannot be purchased with the Supplemental Coverage Option or the Enhanced Coverage Option.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov) or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

## Rates and Dates

Selected Interest Rates for June 2023		Selected Interest Rates for June 2023	
Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	3.500	Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	3.500
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	3.625	Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	3.625
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	5.750	Commodity Loans 1996-Present	5.750



### Arkansas USDA

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#### FSA State Executive Director

*Doris Washington*

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

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

[www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

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

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

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

***FSA State Committee Meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month***

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

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