



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - September 29, 2022

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From the FSA State Executive Director

Fall brings us cool, crisp mornings, which many are looking forward to after the record-breaking summer we have experienced. We still have a way to go before the end of the year, and we are all hoping and praying weather conditions will be more favorable.

FSA employees continue to deliver drought assistance through the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) and the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP). Producers across [more than 90% of Texas](#) may be eligible for LFP. Some producers may also be eligible



for assistance for above normal costs transporting water to livestock, transporting feed to livestock, or livestock to feed in areas impacted by qualifying drought.

Aside from these disaster assistance programs, I also want to promote assistance available for organic producers. The [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) provides organic producers and handlers with financial assistance to reduce the cost of organic certification by reimbursing a portion of their paid certification costs. The [Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program](#) provides additional coverage for expenses associated with obtaining or renewing organic certification. The deadline to apply for both programs is October 31, 2022.

FSA continues to support [urban agriculture](#) producers across the state, including in Dallas where FSA stood up the Dallas Urban County Committee. This Committee has been doing great work in learning about USDA's programs and helping to represent urban producers from across the county. If you are interested in keeping up to date with USDA's urban agriculture support in Dallas County and across Texas, you can sign up for the **TX Dallas Urban Agriculture** newsletter at farmers.gov/subscribe.

Texas FSA is also hiring. County offices across the state are looking for new employees to help us serve farmers and ranchers. To search for available opportunities, visit usajobs.gov.

For additional information and updates on Texas FSA, visit us online at fsa.usda.gov/tx.

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins
State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency - Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist



We are quickly headed into fall and relief from the summer heat across Texas. Fortunately, some areas of our state are also getting some much-needed rain although other areas are still suffering from drought.

On a lighter note, NRCS and Texas Discovery Gardens held a groundbreaking ceremony September 8, 2022, to initiate the beginning of a USDA's People's Garden located in Dallas. The Grow Well and Discover Garden at 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. will be publicly accessible and offer fresh produce in the future. The garden

will also offer workshops and educational events to connect people to agriculture and teach them to grow their own food.

The garden in Dallas is one of the first 17 locations in the nation established by USDA NRCS. To watch this and other gardens grow, visit the USDA [People's Garden webpage](#) or follow the hashtag #PeoplesGarden on USDA's social media channels.

I am excited to announce the USDA is now expanding the People's Garden Initiative to include eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and

small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban, and urban areas can now be recognized as a People's Garden – if the gardens are registered on the USDA website and meet the criteria. Affiliate People's Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People's Garden sign. To learn more about the People's Garden program, or to register one, visit the program webpage at usda.gov/Peoples-Garden.

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Classic program will be accepting applications through October 11, 2022. Private entities whose primary business is related to agriculture, non-governmental organizations with experience working with agriculture producers and non-federal government agencies are eligible to apply. This year's funding priorities are climate-smart agriculture, addressing invasive species, and conservation in urban agricultural systems. For more information and to apply, visit grants.gov.

Applications are also currently being accepted for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) funding consideration through November 4, 2022. Any applications received after November 4, 2022, will be considered for future funding opportunities. To learn more and to apply, visit your local service center or visit www.texas.nrcs.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

Before You Break Out New Ground, Ensure Your Farm Meets Conservation Compliance

The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the conversion of land from native vegetation to commodity crop production after December 23, 1985. As part of the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, if you're proposing to produce agricultural commodities (crops that require annual tillage including one pass planting operations and sugar cane) on land that has been determined highly erodible and that has no crop history prior to December 23, 1985, that land must be farmed in accordance with a conservation plan or system that ensures no substantial increase in soil erosion.

Eligibility for many USDA programs requires compliance with a conservation plan or system on highly erodible land (HEL) used for the production of agricultural commodities. This includes Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan, disaster assistance, safety net, price support, and conservation programs; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs; and Risk Management Agency (RMA) Federal crop insurance.

Before you clear or prepare areas not presently under production for crops that require annual tillage, you are required to file Form AD-1026 “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification,” with FSA indicating the area to be brought into production. The notification will be referred to NRCS to determine if the field is considered highly erodible land. If the field is considered HEL, you are required to implement a conservation plan or system that limits the erosion to the tolerable soil loss (T) for the predominant HEL soil on those fields.

In addition, prior to removing trees or conducting any other land manipulations that may affect wetlands, remember to update form AD-1026, to ensure you remain in compliance with the wetland conservation provisions.

Prior to purchasing or renting new cropland acres, it is recommended that you check with your local USDA Service Center to ensure your activities will be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.

For additional information on highly erodible land conservation and wetland conservation compliance, contact [your local USDA Service Center](#).

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Historic Investment in Partnerships for 70 Climate-Smart Commodities and Rural Projects

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the Biden-Harris Administration through the U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing up to \$2.8 billion in 70 selected projects under the first pool of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity, with projects from the second funding pool to be announced later this year. Ultimately, USDA's anticipated investment will triple to more than \$3 billion in pilots that will create market opportunities for American commodities produced using climate-smart production practices. These initial projects will expand markets for climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. Applicants submitted more than 450 project proposals in this first funding pool, and the strength of the projects identified led USDA to increase its investment in this opportunity from the initial \$1 billion Vilsack announced earlier this year.

Learn More: [<link to USDA Press Release>](#)

USDA Seeks Input on New Grant Program to Strengthen Food Supply Chain, Reduce Irregular Migration and Improve Labor Protections for Farmworkers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is gathering input to help shape a recently announced planned grant program focused on improving the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain by addressing labor shortages in agriculture, reducing irregular migration through increased use of legal pathways, and improving labor protections for farmworkers. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold three virtual listening sessions on Sept. 28-29 for the new farm labor stabilization and protection pilot grant program, which the Biden-Harris administration announced earlier this year as part of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.

The grant program will use up to \$65 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to provide support for agricultural employers in implementing robust labor standards to promote a safe, healthy work environment for both U.S. workers and workers hired from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.

More on the Grant Program

The program will aim to improve the resiliency of our food and agricultural supply chain and advance several major Administration priorities:

- *Driving U.S. economic recovery and safeguarding domestic food security by addressing current labor shortages in agriculture.* Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, agricultural employers were struggling to secure a stable workforce. The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem, threatening our domestic capacity to produce a safe and robust food supply. This pilot program will help address this shortage by expanding the potential pool of workers.
- *Reducing irregular migration through the increased use of legal pathways.* The Biden-Harris administration has taken numerous steps to address the elevated levels of irregular migration from Northern Central America. The H-2A visa program offers a lawful pathway for individuals from these countries to come to the United States to engage in temporary or seasonal agricultural work. An effective H-2A visa program is critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. This pilot program will aim to address challenges that both workers and employers face in utilizing the program.
- *Improving working conditions for farmworkers.* Strong and safe working conditions are critical to the resiliency of the food and agricultural supply chain. Through this pilot program, USDA will support efforts to improve working conditions for both U.S. and H-2A workers and ensure that H-2A workers are not subjected to unfair recruitment practices.

Agricultural Employer Organizations

FSA will hold a listening session for agricultural employer organizations on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 11 a.m. ET. FSA seeks input on:

- Challenges that employers face in securing a stable workforce.
- The set of incentives employers seek from USDA in order to improve their ability to hire workers from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program.
- The labor standards that will make meaningful progress towards ensuring a safer and fairer working environment for both domestic and H-2A farmworkers.

Labor Unions and Farmworker Advocacy Community

FSA will hold a listening session for labor unions on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 2 p.m. ET, and one for the broader farmworker advocacy community on Thursday, Sept. 29 at 2 p.m. ET. From both groups, FSA seeks input on:

- Barriers or challenges faced by farmworkers, specifically those from northern Central American countries participating in the H-2A visa program.
- Recommendations to enhance farmworker protections and to increase farmworker awareness of resources and worker rights.

How to Attend

Register online at fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers. FSA will also consider comments received by 30 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register. Find more details in the [Sept. 21 notice on the Federal Register](#) or on fsa.usda.gov/farmworkers.

USDA Opens People’s Garden Initiative to Gardens Nationwide

USDA is expanding its People’s Garden Initiative to include eligible gardens nationwide. School gardens, community gardens, urban farms, and small-scale agriculture projects in rural, suburban and urban areas can be recognized as a “People’s Garden” if they register on the USDA website and meet criteria including benefitting the community, working collaboratively, incorporating conservation practices and educating the public. Affiliate People’s Garden locations will be indicated on a map on the USDA website, featured in USDA communications, and provided with a People’s Garden sign.

usda.gov/peoples-garden

Obtaining Payments Due to Deceased Producers

In order to claim a Farm Service Agency (FSA) payment on behalf of a deceased producer, all program conditions for the payment must have been met before the applicable producer’s date of death.

If a producer earned a FSA payment prior to his or her death, the following is the order of precedence for the representatives of the producer:

- administrator or executor of the estate
- the surviving spouse
- surviving sons and daughters, including adopted children
- surviving father and mother
- surviving brothers and sisters
- heirs of the deceased person who would be entitled to payment according to the State law

For FSA to release the payment, the legal representative of the deceased producer must file a form FSA-325 to claim the payment for themselves or an estate. The county office will verify that the application, contract, loan agreement, or other similar form requesting payment

issuance, was signed by the applicable deadline by the deceased or a person legally authorized to act on their behalf at that time of application.

If the application, contract or loan agreement form was signed by someone other than the deceased participant, FSA will determine whether the person submitting the form has the legal authority to submit the form.

Payments will be issued to the respective representative's name using the deceased program participant's tax identification number. Payments made to representatives are subject to offset regulations for debts owed by the deceased.

FSA is not responsible for advising persons in obtaining legal advice on how to obtain program benefits that may be due to a participant who has died, disappeared or who has been declared incompetent.

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.

Applying for Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age

- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

For help preparing the application forms, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Invests \$2.2 Million in Risk Management Education for Farmers, Including Historically Underserved and Small-scale

USDA announced it is awarding \$2.2 million to 16 organizations to educate historically underserved producers, small-scale farmers and others on farm risk management and climate-smart farm practices. The funding from USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) provides the resources for organizations, such as nonprofits and universities, to develop training and resources for producers on risk management options.

This \$2.2 million investment for 2022 builds on a [nearly \\$1 million investment in 2021](#). RMA advertised available funding in January 2022, and more than 50 organizations applied. Successful applicants provided comprehensive summary of work statements and budgets, and proposals that demonstrated an ability to partner with other entities to deliver training. Organizations receiving funding this year include nonprofits, historically black colleges and universities, and university extensions, among others.

For example, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff will use the funding to provide financial, legal, and marketing risk education to underserved producers and limited resource producers in eastern and southwestern Arkansas.

In addition to the University of Pine Bluff at Arkansas, other recipients include:

- The University of Arizona - Provides risk management training to growers on Tribal lands in Arizona and New Mexico.
- Napa Valley Grape Growers - Trains wine-grape producers to mitigate risks related to climate change, drought, and pest and disease risk.
- Up In Farms – Provides training on whole farm and micro farm policies to African American growers in Mississippi.
- Rural South Institute – Educates African American producers on the basics of crop insurance and financial risk management in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.
- AgriLogic Consulting LLC – Delivers risk management, recordkeeping, and crop insurance training to veterans, new farmers, and others in North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas.

- Adelante Mujeres – Provides regenerative agriculture courses, quarterly workshops, farm field trips, and one-on-one sessions for Hispanic growers in Oregon.
- Michigan State University – Offers in-person networking and resource events for African American, beginning, and urban farmers to meet educators, lenders, and assistance providers.
- Iowa Organic Association – Provides technical support for organic farmers seeking support and guidance about crop insurance, lending resources, and production mentorship.
- MCL Jasco – Trains African American and beginning producers in Mississippi on financial management, farm financial benchmarking, crop insurance, and marketing contracts.
- Alabama A&M University - Trains African American and veteran producers on crop insurance, risk management tools and strategies, with hands-on educational outreach program.
- Center for Rural Affairs - Focuses training on cover crops and relay cropping, new and existing related coverage options, and cost share options in Iowa, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.
- The Gleaning Network of Texas – Provides targeted risk management assistance to direct marketing farmers in North Texas, with an emphasis on specialty crop growers.
- RightRisk LLC - Delivers crop insurance and other risk management training to beginning producers in Alaska.
- Organic Trade Association – Creates durable educational materials for organic producers in 19 states, including videos, online courses, podcasts, and webinars on crop insurance.
- Farm Commons - Provides intimate peer-to-peer learning format farmers prefer with the wide reach and constant availability of a podcast.

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.

Biden-Harris Administration Makes \$500 Million Available to Increase Innovative American-Made Fertilizer Production

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the Biden-Harris Administration is making \$500 million in grants available to increase American-made fertilizer production to spur competition and combat price hikes on U.S. farmers caused by the war in Ukraine.

The Biden-Harris Administration's [Fertilizer Production Expansion Program](#) is part of a whole-of-government effort to promote competition in agricultural markets. The funds are being made available through the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Eligible entities are for-profit businesses and corporations, nonprofit entities, Tribes and Tribal organizations, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, and state or local governments. Private entities must be independently owned and operated to apply.

The Department will begin accepting applications in the coming days via www.grants.gov. Notably, there will be two opportunities for submission.

[Learn more.](#)

Upcoming Events

September 29, 2022

[TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Alpine](#)

October 4, 2022

[TSCRA Ranch Gatherings, San Angelo](#)

October 5, 2022

[TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Victoria](#)

October 10, 2022

[The Next Generation of Ranching: A Generational Transition Conference](#)

October 11, 2022

[TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Throckmorton](#)

October 13, 2022

[Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention Workshop](#)

October 13, 2022

[Revitalizing the Natural Resources of Texas Hill Country with Holistic Grazing](#)

October 18, 2022

[TSCRA Ranch Gathering, Fredericksburg](#)

October 18, 2022

[Agri-Land Resources Workshop](#)

October 19-21, 2022

[Texas Section Society for Range Management \(TSSRM\) Annual Meeting](#)

October 19, 2022

[Faces of Agriculture - USDA Speaker Series](#)

October 19, 2022

[DE-GO-LA RC&D INC. Farm and Ranch Resource Workshop \(Victoria\)](#)

October 20-23, 2022
[23rd Texas Master Naturalist Program Annual Meeting](#)

October 24- 26, 2022
[82nd Annual Meeting of SWCD Directors, Galveston](#)

October 26-28, 2022
[Texas Forestry Association 108th Annual Conference](#)

October 26, 2022
[South Texas Grazing Lands Coalition Workshop-PROFITABLE RANCHING](#)

October 26-27, 2022
[South Texas Farm and Ranch Show, Victoria](#)

October 27-28, 2022
[King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management Symposium, In Person & Zoom](#)

October 28– 29, 2022
[Texas Coastal Prairie Conference: Preserving Lands and Legacies](#)

USDA in Texas



Farm Service Agency

State Executive Director
Kelly Adkins

State Committee

Debra Barrett, Committee Chair
Armando Mandujano
Angie Martin
Wesley Ratcliff
Cody Scogin

Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist
Kristy Oates