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## From the FSA State Executive Director

June has been another month where our neighbors and friends have been significantly impacted by disastrous severe storms and tornadoes. The Texas FSA team and I are keeping all of you and your families impacted by these storms in our thoughts and prayers, especially those of you in Perryton and Matador.

I'll remind you that USDA has disaster assistance programs to help you recover. FSA also offers a variety of loans and loan servicing options



including [emergency loans](#) that can assist producers impacted by natural disasters manage their credit needs.

Additional information on these and other disaster programs can be found online at [farmers.gov/protection-recovery](https://farmers.gov/protection-recovery).

To give producers more time to apply for assistance, USDA extended the deadline for the Emergency Relief Program Phase 2 (ERP2) to July 14. FSA is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to producers who need assistance completing an ERP Phase Two application.

FSA is partnering with nine organizations to provide educational and technical assistance to producers who need assistance completing an ERP2 application. To find an organization and contact person in your area to help you with the application process, visit [fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index](https://fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index). Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO, in partnership with Texas Center for Local Foods, have created an [ERP2 course](#) to help you assess your eligibility and prepare and submit your application. If you've been considering ERP2, this course can help answer some of your questions.

Farmers and ranchers across Texas continue to experience intense drought conditions. Livestock producers may be eligible for the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP). As of June 5, [more than 150 Texas counties](#) are eligible for LFP. Contact your local FSA office for more information and to schedule an appointment.

If you have not yet completed your crop acreage reports, make an appointment with [FSA](#). Filing an accurate crop acreage report is required in order to receive many USDA program benefits. July 15 is a major deadline for most crops, but acreage reporting deadlines vary by county and by crop. Contact the FSA for acreage reporting deadlines that are specific to your county.

On June 15, FSA opened the nomination period for [2023 FSA County Committee elections](#). County committees enable producers to make important decisions on how federal farm programs are administered locally. FSA is unveiling a [new GIS tool](#) to make it easier for all producers to participate in the county committee nomination and elections processes and easily determine if there is a committee position open representing your Local Administrative Area (LAA).

Eligible county committee nominees must sign nomination form [FSA-669-A](#), or [FSA-669-A-3](#) (for urban county committees). All nomination forms for the 2023 election must be postmarked or received in your local FSA office by Aug. 1.

Wishing you and your family a happy and safe July 4<sup>th</sup>!

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins  
State Executive Director  
Farm Service Agency – Texas

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**From the NRCS State Conservationist**



June is a month of celebration and preparation. The rest of the nation now joins Texas during the month in commemorating “Juneteenth” – a holiday that started within our state and is now recognized nationally as the result of the work of fellow Texan and NRCS Partner Opal Lee.

Known as the “grandmother of Juneteenth,” Opal and her farm manager, Greg Joel, have been working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas to find ways to care for the land while growing delicious food with optimum nutrient density. The farm, which is officially recognized as a USDA People’s Garden, grows food for the Community Food Bank in Fort Worth and offers their produce at the Cowtown Farmers Market in Fort Worth for a reduced rate for USDA-SNAP customers.

In a world that can often be divisive and isolating, Opal Lee’s farm is a shining example of how gardening can bring people together and create a sense of belonging. Her spirit of sharing and caring is contagious, and it motivates others to get involved and make a difference in their own communities. You can read her [“Growing Food with liberty and justice for all”](#) story online via our ArcGIS story map.

June also marks the beginning of the 2023 Hurricane Season. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecast says 2023 will include a "near-normal" number of storms in 2023. Near “normal” or not, it only takes one storm to do catastrophic damage to rural counties across Texas that lack the resources for large-scale constructions projects to repair critical infrastructure or mitigate damage to watersheds.

In May, the Administration announced a \$265 million investment in 28 [Emergency Watershed Protection](#) (EWP) infrastructure projects in 16 states impacted by extreme weather events to help communities recover from and prepare for natural disasters like floods, windstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and drought. The new EWP projects are part of the larger \$925 million investment through the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act and include streambank stabilization, flood prevention and watershed restoration projects. In Texas, the EWP Program was used to help Jasper County after Hurricane Laura swept through Texas in August 2020, bringing 60-mile-an-hour winds, snapping trees, knocking down power lines and flooding the county with a three-foot storm surge that damaged a roadway system. EWP provided a lifeline for the county to recover. Read about Jasper’s recovery using the EWP program on our [NRCS Texas website](#).

Even as we prepare for our summer weather and whatever Mother Nature throws our way, we continue to promote climate-smart practices across the state. NRCS is working with the University of Texas at El Paso NRCS on a \$2 million, four-year, dynamic carbon SMART (Soil Monitoring, Assessment, Research, and Training) project. The project will train producers to quantify soil carbon stocks and assess the efficacy of climate-smart conservation practices. The project will facilitate regional capacity-building by recruiting and training local technical service providers and qualified individuals who can effectively recruit underserved producers to participate in NRCS financial and technical assistance for Soil Organic Carbon Stock Monitoring.

The project is part of an \$8 million regional project on soil organic carbon stock monitoring to support and expand measurement and monitoring of carbon in soil on working agricultural

lands. UT El Paso is one of four partners working to assess how climate-smart practices are affecting carbon sequestration. Learn more [online](#).

Another partnership opportunity is available as the application period continues for the NRCS [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. In addition to the funding opportunity, NRCS has embarked on a concerted effort to streamline and simplify RCPP and improve the experience for partners, producers and employees. **The deadline for application submissions is Aug. 18, 2023.**

Our agency is abuzz in June as we celebrated National Pollinator Week June 19-25, 2023. Pollinator species, such as bees, other insects, birds and bats play a critical role in producing more than 100 crops grown in the United States. The honeybee pollination alone adds more than \$18 billion in value to agricultural crops annually. NRCS has long recognized the important of pollinators to our ecosystems and has recommended practices such as pollinator planting, special cover crop seed recommendations and delayed mowing to encourage pollinator habitat. Learn more about USDA pollinator work [online](#).

June is also the time we recognize the contributions from employees, partners and stakeholders of various backgrounds as part of the National LGBTQ+ Month. By building a team with diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences, we ultimately enhance our capabilities as an agency. As we celebrate the progress we have made towards inclusivity, we also acknowledge the challenges that remain for the LGBTQ+ community. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. The Department prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Finally, I want to reiterate the need for nominations for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations opened in May and will be accepted until July 15, 2023. The 12-member committee is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. We need Texas representation on this team. Members 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. For more information, visit the [nomination website](#).

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (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).

### **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 PARD, 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 [PARD 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 PARD 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, PARD application and acreage reporting during the same office visit.

### **More Information**

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

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## **USDA Announces Corrections to Emergency Relief Program Policy to More Accurately Reflect 2020 and 2021 Natural Disaster Impacts on Crops Intended for On-Farm Use**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is updating the [Emergency Relief Program \(ERP\) Phase Two](#) to provide a method for valuing losses and accessing program benefits to eligible producers of certain crops, including grapes grown and used by the same producer for wine production or forage that is grown, stored and fed to livestock, that do not generate revenue directly from the sale of the crop. These updates ensure that ERP benefits are more reflective of these producers' actual crop losses resulting from 2020 and 2021 natural disaster events. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin accepting ERP Phase Two applications from eligible wine grape and forage producers once this technical correction to ERP is published in the Federal Register and becomes effective, which it anticipates will be on Friday, June 16, 2023. The deadline to submit applications for ERP Phase Two is July 14.

### **Background**

In January 2023, FSA announced ERP Phase Two, designed to wrap-up and fill remaining gaps in previous natural disaster assistance for 2020 and 2021.

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 is primarily for producers of crops that were not covered by Federal Crop Insurance or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program since crops covered by Federal Crop Insurance and NAP were included in the assistance under ERP Phase One administered in 2022.

## **Determining Crop Value**

Producers of certain crops now have a method for including crop value in their allowable gross revenue for the purpose of determining ERP Phase 2 benefits.

The value of the eligible crop intended for on-farm use will be based on the producer's actual production of the crop and a price for the crop as determined by FSA's Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs based on the best available data for each crop such as published crop price data or the average price obtained by other producers in the area. Acceptable, published sources including but are not limited to Federal Crop Insurance Corporation established prices, FSA established National Crop Table prices and National Agricultural Statistic Service prices.

[Revenue and pricing guidelines](#) for expected revenue for wine grapes and on-farm forage is available online for producer reference and convenience when applying for ERP Phase Two.

Wine grape and forage producers who have already submitted their ERP Phase Two applications to FSA have the option of revising the application and updating their allowable gross revenue to include crop value if applicable.

Producers of crops grown for on-farm use other than wine grapes and forage may request consideration to use a crop's value in their allowable gross revenue. Submit requests to [RA.FSA.DCWA2.ppb@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:RA.FSA.DCWA2.ppb@wdc.usda.gov). FSA's Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs will review submitted requests.

## **Additional Technical Corrections – Conservation Programs**

In addition to emergency relief policy updates, FSA has also established policy corrections for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and the Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). The policy correction clarifies that federal payments received for the same practice will be considered duplicative assistance for producers who receive ECP and EFRP program payments. The revised program provisions are related to program updates FSA announced in January that give more farmers, ranchers, and tribes the opportunity to apply for and access programs that support recovery following natural disasters (see [January 10, 2023 news release](#) for more information).

ECP and EFRP provide financial and technical assistance to restore conservation practices like fencing, damaged farmland or forests following natural disasters.

## **More Information**

FSA offers an online [ERP tool](#) to help producers determine what is considered allowable gross revenue.. Producers should contact their local FSA office to make an appointment to apply for ERP Phase Two. 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 and acreage report during the same office visit. Applications for the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program, a revenue-based program for losses resulting from the pandemic, can also be completed. 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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## **Biden-Harris Administration Announces Intended Investment of Approximately \$300 Million in 50 Projects Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access for Underserved Producers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced its selection of 50 projects for potential award, totaling approximately \$300 million. These innovative projects will help improve access to land, capital, and markets for underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. The Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access (Increasing Land Access) Program, which is funded by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, works to increase access to farm ownership opportunities, improve results for those with heirs' property or fractionated land, increase access to markets and capital that affect the ability to access land, and improve land ownership, land succession and agricultural business planning.

Examples of selectees for potential award include:

- **Community Development Corporation of Oregon** will work to provide long term and sustainable land access to disadvantaged refugee and immigrant beginning farmers in Oregon's east Multnomah and Clackamas counties. A few of the goals of the project are to purchase the currently rented farm, reduce the net cost of the land through a conservation or working lands easement, and provide an equitable and engaging process of education and training about cooperative land ownership, finance concepts, and related USDA programs.
- **The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin** will work to establish an equity capital fund to provide support for Tribal producers' land, equipment, and operational needs. Additionally, this project will work to provide targeted technical assistance to Tribal producers in developing comprehensive farm and food business plans, including conservation plans to support expanded production and access to the full suite of USDA and other support resources.
- **Workin' Rootz** will work to increase access to land and capacity-building at five urban farms/community market gardens in Detroit which include Workin' Roots Farm, Love n' Labor, Foster Patch Community Garden, Love Earth Herbal, and Urban Bush Sistahs. These farms will serve as resource hubs by sharing infrastructure (tiller, lawn tractor, wash and pack, cooler storage, etc.) with other urban farmers and gardeners in their prospective neighborhoods.
- **Maine Farmland Trust** will work with low-income farmers on access to low-interest capital for land purchase or business operations, farm upgrades and infrastructure investments that promote viability, technical assistance in the areas of real estate and business planning, and more.



- **Alabama A&M University, in collaboration with four other 1890 land grant universities (Southern University, Alcorn State University, Fort Valley State University, and Tennessee State University) and many other local organizations,** will provide delivery of technical assistance to underserved farm populations in chronically and economically depressed communities of Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi to ensure the success of existing farmers and ranchers and to rapidly increase the numbers of small farm operators in the targeted communities.

The tentative selectees include national, regional, and local projects that cover 40 states and territories including Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. USDA will work with the selected applicants to finalize the scope and funding levels in the coming months.

[See the full list of Increasing Land Access Program selected projects.](#)

### **Environmental Assessment**

These projects will likely result in the purchase of land, construction of farm infrastructure and other activities that could have potential impacts on environmental resources. USDA has developed a Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Increasing Land Access Program to evaluate the program's overarching environmental impacts as they relate to the National Environmental Policy Act.

The environmental assessment is available [online for public review](#). USDA is requesting comments on the program's potential impact on the environment. The feedback will be incorporated into the final assessment, as appropriate, prior to a decision.

USDA will consider comments received by Friday, July 14, 2023, at 5 p.m. EDT. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent possible. Comments may be submitted:

- Electronically at: [Access@usda.gov](mailto:Access@usda.gov)
- By mail at: Attn: Michael Mannigan, Grants Management Specialist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, Outreach Office, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC, 20250-0506

For more information, contact Michael Mannigan at [Land.Access@usda.gov](mailto:Land.Access@usda.gov). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication should contact the USDA Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice).

### **More Information**

The Increasing Land Access Program was [originally announced in August 2022](#) as part of a broader investment to help ensure underserved producers have the resources, tools, programs and technical support they need to succeed and is being funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

The Increasing Land Access Program is part of USDA's commitment to equity across the Department and steps it has taken under Secretary Vilsack's direction to improve equity and access, eliminate barriers to its programs for underserved individuals and communities, and build a workforce more representative of America. Earlier in the year, the [USDA Equity](#)

[Commission](#), which is comprised of independent members from diverse backgrounds, released its interim recommendations to remove barriers to inclusion and access at USDA. The program is also an important component of the Department's and President Biden's vision to [Advance Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).

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## USDA Accepts More Than 1 Million Acres in Offers Through Conservation Reserve Program General Signup

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting more than 1 million acres in this year's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General signup. This is one of several signups that USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is holding for the program, and these results reflect the recognition the agricultural community give to CRP as a resource for climate-smart agriculture that helps promote plant and animal biodiversity as well as healthier soil. The signup's results include more than 190,000 acres in Texas.

While offers for new land in this General CRP signup totaled about 295,000 acres nationwide, producers submitted re-enrollment offers for 891,000 expiring acres, reflecting the successes of participating in CRP longer term. The total number of CRP acres will continue to climb in the coming weeks once FSA accepts acres on the Grassland CRP signup, which closed May 26. Additionally, so far this year, FSA has received 761,000 offered acres for the Continuous CRP signup, for which FSA accepts applications year-round.

The number of accepted acres that are actually enrolled in General CRP will be decided later this year. Participating producers and landowners should also remember that submitting and accepting a CRP offer is the start of the process, and producers still need to develop a conservation plan before enrolling their land on DATE, 2023. Each year, during the window between offer acceptance and land enrollment, some producers change their mind and ultimately decide not to enroll some accepted acres without penalty.

### General CRP Signup

The General CRP Signup 60 ran from February 27 through April 7, 2023.

Through CRP, producers and landowners establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve soil health and water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on agricultural land. In addition to the other well-documented benefits, lands enrolled in CRP are playing a key role in climate change mitigation efforts across the country.

In 2021, FSA introduced improvements to the program, which included a new Climate-Smart Practice Incentive to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This incentive provides a 3, 5, or 10 percent incentive payment based on the predominant vegetation type for the practices enrolled – from grasses to trees to wetland restoration.

## Other CRP Signups

[Grassland CRP](#) is a *working lands program* that helps producers and landowners protect grassland from conversion while enabling haying and grazing activities to continue. Lands enrolled support haying and grazing operations and promotes plant and animal biodiversity. Lands are also protected from being converted to uses other than grassland. This year's signup for Grassland CRP ran from April 17 through May 26.

Under [Continuous CRP](#), producers and landowners can enroll throughout the year. Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. Continuous CRP includes the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative, the Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Also available is the Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) initiative. CLEAR30, a signup opportunity under that initiative, was originally piloted in twelve states but has since been expanded nationwide, giving producers and landowners across the country the opportunity to enroll in 30-year CRP contracts for water quality practices.

## More Information

To learn more about FSA programs, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also 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](#).

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](#).

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## USDA Expands Wildlife Conservation with New Investments in Working Lands for Wildlife

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is expanding its work on wildlife conservation, leveraging a suite of voluntary, incentive-based tools. Leveraging resources of the Conservation Reserve Program and the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), the five-year commitment includes significant funding and staff resources, focusing their delivery to working lands in key geographies across the country through a series of new Frameworks for Conservation Action.

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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.

## Urban and Suburban County Committees

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees as well as make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. FSA established county committees specifically focused on urban agriculture. The urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the new county committees may address areas such as food access, community engagement, support of local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction.

Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Urban county committee members will provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs and serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

County committees for urban agriculture are located in 17 cities across the U.S. including Dallas.

### 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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## Gear Up for the 2023 Hurricane Season

Hurricane season is officially underway and lasts until November 30. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts that the 2023 hurricane season will be near normal in the Atlantic and produce 12 to 17 named storms, of which five to nine could become hurricanes, including one to four major hurricanes.

USDA encourages producers to prepare and protect their family and agricultural operations.

1. **Develop an Emergency Plan** - Ensure your household and employees know your hurricane plan, including meeting points, emergency contact lists, and alternate evacuation routes in case infrastructure is damaged.
2. **Remove Debris and Secure Large Objects** - Clean out culverts, ditches, and other drainage areas, especially before and during peak hurricane season to reduce water damage. Most injuries to animals, people, or structures during a hurricane are caused by flying objects. To lessen the risk, minimize the presence of equipment, supplies, and debris that may become airborne during high winds or encountered in floodwaters.
3. **Secure Important Records and Documents**- Pre- and post-hurricane documentation is extremely important for insurance compensation and recovery assistance. You'll want to have thorough records of damages and losses sustained on your farm as well as documentation of your cleanup and recovery efforts.
  - o It is critical to document inventory of farm buildings, vehicles, equipment, and livestock before a disaster occurs. Take photos, videos, or make written lists with descriptions. Keep copies of this inventory in multiple places: computer, off-site in a safe location, and on a cloud-based server where information is transmitted and saved weekly.
4. **Know Your Insurance Options**- Regularly review your insurance policies with your agent to be sure you have adequate coverage, including flood insurance, for your facilities, vehicles, farm buildings, crops and livestock. Note, there are limitations on

how soon insurance coverage will take effect. Generally, insurance policies will not cover damage if the policy was not in place before a disaster.

5. **Gather Supplies** - Have drinking water, canned food, a generator, batteries, a flashlight, and fuel available in case you lose power. For widespread outages, credit and debit cards may not work, so have cash handy.
6. **Access Real-time Emergency Information**- Download the FEMA app for free on the App Store and Google Play for safety tips on what to do before, during, and after disasters. Subscribe to our [text message and email service](#) to receive real-time, local operational and recovery information from the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Risk Management Agency.

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

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## Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes.

Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt.

Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$2,037,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

For more information on guaranteed loans, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## 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](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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## 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

### Risk Management Agency

**Regional Director**  
Jim Bellmon

