



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA News - Lone Star State Edition - December 20, 2023

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)

- [From the FSA State Executive Director](#)
 - [From the NRCS State Conservationist](#)
 - [Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs Receive 2018 Farm Bill One Year Extension, Farmers Can Now Enroll for the 2024 Crop Year](#)
 - [NRCS Texas Announces Application Deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
 - [Reminder: Discrimination Financial Assistance Program](#)
 - [USDA Reminds Specialty Crop Growers of Deadline to Apply for Assistance for 2023 On-Farm Food Safety Expenses](#)
 - [USDA Makes Producer-Friendly Change to 2023 Notice of Loss Requirements for Two Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs](#)
 - [USDA Now Accepting Applications for Farm Loans Online](#)
 - [USDA Reminds Direct Loan Borrowers of Cash Flow-Based and Extraordinary Measures Assistance Options](#)
 - [Upcoming Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Opportunities](#)
 - [USDA Provides Local Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - [Every Season is Scam Season](#)
-

From the FSA State Executive Director

As we approach the end of 2023, I am thankful for the dedicated team of Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees and County Committees serving farmers and ranchers across Texas. From implementing new programs to assisting producers with disaster recovery and also welcoming new FSA employees, our team has navigated it all to ensure we remain ready to meet your farm program and farm loan needs.

To close out 2023, I'll just provide a few program highlights. Details about these programs follow in the body of this newsletter.



Enrollment for the [Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage](#) safety-net programs for the 2024 crop year opened on Dec. 18. Producers have until March 15, 2024, to enroll and make election changes. I encourage you to contact your FSA soon for an appointment to avoid a last-minute rush. Remember, even if you are not changing your election, you still must have a signed contract on file with FSA before the enrollment deadline.

In late November, the United States Department of Agriculture [announced](#) a waiver of the notice of loss reporting period for 2023 for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). For producers who incurred ELAP-eligible losses in 2023, you will need to submit a notice of loss by Jan. 30, 2024. For LIP, the payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year.

Earlier this month, FSA launched an online application for Direct Loan customers. The Online Loan Application (OLA) tool is interactive, guided, paperless, and provides customers with features such as an electronic signature option, the ability to attach documents such as tax returns, and to complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. You can access the tool from a computer, tablet, or smartphone by visiting farmers.gov/loan-application.

The OLA tool is only available to producers who will be, or are currently, operating their agricultural operation as an individual. FSA is expanding the tool's availability to married couples applying jointly and other legal entities in 2024. The entire Texas FSA team looks forward to serving you in 2024.

Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season!

Sincerely,

Kelly Adkins
State Executive Director
Farm Service Agency – Texas

From the NRCS State Conservationist



As we are all busy preparing for the holidays and wrapping up 2023, I want to wish each of you a wonderful holiday season. As we look ahead to 2024, I want to encourage you to visit with your USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff about ways we can assist you with improving and protecting the natural resources on your farm, ranch, urban agriculture or forestry operation with conservation planning and financial assistance.

The relationship between NRCS and Central Texas rancher, Chuck Emerson, is just one example of the value of working closely with NRCS to accomplish conservation goals on your operation. With assistance from NRCS, Mr. Emerson was able to restore pasture and wildlife habitat on his operation. Read more in [“Conserving Land for the Future”](#) on the [NRCS Texas Website](#).

NRCS Texas recently [announced](#) that applications for the [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) are due by Jan. 26, 2024, to be considered for fiscal year (FY) 2024 funding. USDA is increasing the minimum annual payment for agricultural producers participating in CSP from \$1,500 to \$4,000 starting in FY24. The increase addresses challenges faced by small-scale, underserved, and urban producers and improves equity in the program by making participating more financially beneficial for smaller operations. The new minimum payment is available for new and renewed CSP contracts. For more information, contact your [local NRCS office](#).

Ag producers in El Paso County, Texas, interested in conservation practices to manage soil moisture, improve irrigation efficiency, or otherwise conserve ground and surface water resources are encouraged to apply for assistance through the [EQIP WaterSMART Initiative \(WSI\)](#) by **Jan. 26, 2024**. NRCS’s EQIP WSI is a collaboration with the Department of Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to coordinate investments in priority areas for improving water conservation and drought resilience.

NRCS and Reclamation identified nine new priority areas for fiscal year 2024. In total, \$29.7 million in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding is available

through the initiative in 45 priority areas in 16 states including Texas. Priority areas in Texas include: [El Paso County Water Improvement District No.1](#), which is new to the initiative this year. Water conservation is extremely important in this area due to frequent, extreme drought conditions and an increasing population. These efforts will further increase water savings by implementing practices that improve irrigation efficiency, increase naturally available soil moisture, and decrease surface water depletion.

NRCS and FSA held a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house at the USDA Dallas Urban Service Center on Dec. 14. I was honored to be joined by NRCS Assistant Chief Kenneth Walker and FPAC Deputy Under Secretary [Gloria Montañó Greene, along with both NRCS and FSA staff, partners, and customers for the](#) ribbon cutting ceremony. The event’s participation rate demonstrates the need to have service centers located in areas that are easily accessible by our growing population of urban agriculture producers.

I look forward to what 2024 has in store for NRCS and agricultural producers across the state.

Sincerely,

Kristy Oates
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Texas

Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs Receive 2018 Farm Bill One Year Extension, Farmers Can Now Enroll for the 2024 Crop Year

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers can now enroll in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\)](#) programs for the 2024 crop year. Producers can enroll and make election changes for the 2024 crop year starting Dec. 18, 2023. The deadline to complete enrollment and any election change is March 15, 2024.

On Nov. 16, 2023, President Biden signed into law H.R. 6363, the *Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-22), which extended the *Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018* (Pub. L. 115-334), more commonly known as the 2018 Farm Bill, through September 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue operating.

2024 Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2024 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2024 unless an election change is made.

If producers do not submit their election revision by the March 15, 2024, deadline, their election remains the same as their 2023 election for commodities on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

2022 Crop Year Payments

This fall, FSA issued payments totaling more than \$267 million to agricultural producers who enrolled in the 2022 ARC-CO option and the ARC-IC option for covered commodities that triggered a payment. Payments through the PLC option did not trigger for the 2022 crop year.

ARC and PLC payments for a given crop year are paid out the following fall to allow actual county yields and the Market Year Average prices to be finalized. These payments help mitigate fluctuations in either revenue or prices for certain crops. Payments for crops that may trigger for the 2023 crop year will be issued in the fall of 2024.

Crop Insurance Considerations

ARC and PLC are part of a broader USDA safety net that also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election can purchase Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Web-Based Decision Tools

Many universities offer web-based decision tools to help producers make informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Producers are encouraged to use the tool of their choice to support their ARC and PLC elections.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). Producers can also make elections and complete enrollment [online with level 2 eAuth](#).

NRCS Texas Announces Application Deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program

While the NRCS continuously accepts applications for enrollment into the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP) (both Classic and CSP-Inflation Reduction Act [IRA]) throughout the year, interested applicants must submit applications to the local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office by **Jan. 26, 2024**, for the CSP Classic and the CSP-IRA sign up. Any applications received after Jan. 26, 2024, will be considered for future CSP application sign ups.

USDA is increasing the minimum annual payment for agricultural producers participating in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from \$1,500 to \$4,000 starting in fiscal year 2024. The increase addresses challenges faced by small scale, underserved, and urban

producers and improves equity in the program by making participation more financially beneficial for smaller operations. The new minimum payment is available for new and renewed CSP contracts.

CSP helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation. CSP participants earn an annual payment for 5 years which enables them to achieve a greater level on conservation and stewardship. Whether you are looking to improve grazing conditions, increase crop resiliency, or develop wildlife habitat, NRCS can custom design a CSP plan to help you meet those goals. CSP-IRA provides an exciting opportunity for producers to install conservation activities promoting climate-smart agriculture and forestry greenhouse gas mitigation on their agricultural operation.

CSP offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level. The program is designed to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities and maintaining their baseline level of conservation.

Examples of CSP enhancements that are suitable for being adopted by smaller scale and urban producers include:

- Planting multi-species cover crops
- Mulching with natural materials
- Establishing pollinator habitats
- Soil health crop rotation

Inflation Reduction Act and CSP

Currently, an unprecedented amount of funding is available for CSP through the Inflation Reduction Act and Farm Bill. The Inflation Reduction Act provided \$19.5 billion in additional funding for NRCS' oversubscribed programs like CSP for five years. Inflation Reduction Act funds are available to help producers adopt climate-smart practices.

NRCS [recently announced](#) it increased the number of [Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#) eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for fiscal year 2024 through CSP, the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), and the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP). To learn more, download the [list of practices](#) and a [fact sheet](#).

How to Apply

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round, but producers interested in CSP should apply by **Jan. 26, 2024**, for consideration. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding.

For more information about assistance available, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

Reminder: Discrimination Financial Assistance Program

USDA continues to accept applications for assistance through the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program for Texas farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. The application process will close on January 13, 2024. Borrowers have the option to apply for assistance online via 22007apply.gov or through a paper-based form.

Details about the program, including an application and e-filing portal, are available at 22007apply.gov. The website includes an English and Spanish language application that applicants can download or submit via an e-filing portal, information on how to obtain technical assistance in-person or virtually, and additional resources and details about the program.

Applicants can also call a free call center at 1-800-721-0970 or visit one of several dozen brick-and-mortar offices the program has set up around the country. Locations are provided on the program website and vendors will update the local events schedule with more information as it becomes available.

Several entities are involved in the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, with varying roles and responsibilities. The National Administrator and Regional Hubs are responsible for conducting outreach, assisting with the financial assistance application process, processing applications, managing program call centers, and operating local offices. Additional outreach and application support is provided by trusted community groups. These groups include [AgrAbility](#), the [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#), [Farmers' Legal Action Group](#), [Federation of Southern Cooperatives](#), [Intertribal Agriculture Council](#), [Land Loss Prevention Program](#), [National Young Farmers Coalition](#), and [Rural Coalition](#).

It is important to note that filing an application is FREE and does not require a lawyer.

If you want to get weekly updates on the program's events and progress, you can go to <https://22007apply.gov>, and subscribe to a weekly newsletter.

USDA Reminds Specialty Crop Growers of Deadline to Apply for Assistance for 2023 On-Farm Food Safety Expenses

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reminds specialty crop growers that assistance is available for producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification through the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) program. Producers can apply for assistance on their calendar year 2023 expenses through Jan. 31, 2024.

Program Details

FSCSC assists specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety certification and related expenses pertaining to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar

year 2023. FSCSC covers a percentage of the specialty crop operation's cost of obtaining or renewing its certification, as well as a portion of related expenses.

To be eligible for FSCSC, the applicant must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and have paid eligible expenses related to the 2023 certification.

Specialty crop operations may receive assistance for the following costs:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each category of eligible costs. A higher payment rate has been set for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. Details about the payment rates and limitations can be found at farmers.gov/food-safety.

Applying for Assistance

The FSCSC application period for 2023 closes Jan. 31, 2024. FSA will issue payments after the application period closes. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means.

Specialty crop producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to assist. Visit farmers.gov/food-safety for additional program details, eligibility information and forms needed to apply.

USDA Makes Producer-Friendly Change to 2023 Notice of Loss Requirements for Two Livestock Disaster Assistance Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has waived certain notice of loss requirements for 2023 for the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish](#) (ELAP) and [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP). In an effort to streamline assistance to support access to critical 2023 natural disaster recovery assistance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is waiving the requirement to submit ELAP or LIP notices of loss within a pre-determined number of days for 2023. Instead, producers have the flexibility to submit 2023 notices of loss as soon as possible, once losses are realized, following a natural disaster event or no later than the established annual program application for payment deadlines for

each program. FSA county committees are also being asked to re-evaluate 2023 ELAP and LIP late-filed notices of loss to determine if the waiver applies.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish

ELAP provides recovery assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish losses due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition, including blizzards, disease, water shortages and wildfires. ELAP covers grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres. ELAP also covers certain mortality losses for livestock including honeybees and farm-raised fish as well as honeybee hive losses. ELAP is designed to address losses not covered by other FSA disaster assistance programs.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for ELAP to file a notice of loss with FSA within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent for livestock and farm-raised fish and 15 calendar days for honeybees. Under this waiver, notices of loss are to be completed by the eligible producer and submitted to FSA no later than the annual program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred. Therefore, producers who incurred ELAP-eligible losses in 2023, will need to submit a notice of loss by Jan. 30, 2024.

Livestock Indemnity Program

LIP provides disaster recovery assistance to livestock owners and contract growers who experience livestock deaths, in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law, including wolves and avian predators. LIP also helps livestock owners who must sell livestock at a reduced price because of an injury from certain loss conditions.

For 2023, FSA is waiving the regulatory requirement for producers who are eligible for LIP to file a notice of loss within 30 calendar days from when the loss first became apparent. Under this waiver, producers are still required to complete and submit the notice of loss to FSA no later than the annual program payment application date, which is 60 calendar days following the program year in which the loss occurred. The LIP payment application and notice of loss deadline is Feb. 29, 2024, for the 2023 program year.

2023 Disapproved Applications

FSA county committees will review all notices of loss for both ELAP and LIP that were previously disapproved for the 2023 program year due to late filing and re-evaluate them to determine if the waiver applies. To receive ELAP and LIP benefits, producers will still need to file an application for payment by the established program deadline for the 2023 program year. Producers who are unsure about the status of their notice of loss or application for payment, should contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible.

Supporting Documentation

Accurate records and loss documentation are critical following disaster events and are required when filing notices of loss with FSA. Acceptable loss documentation includes:

- Documentation of the number, kind, type, and weight range of livestock that have died, supplemented, if possible, by photographs or video records of ownership and losses.
- Rendering truck receipts by kind, type, and weight - important to document prior to disposal.
- Beginning inventory supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.
- Documentation from Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Natural Resources, or other sources to substantiate eligible death losses due to an eligible loss condition.
- Documentation that livestock were removed from grazing pastures due to an eligible adverse weather or loss condition.
- Costs of transporting livestock feed to eligible livestock, such as receipts for equipment rental fees for hay lifts and snow removal.
- Feed purchase receipts if feed supplies or grazing pastures are destroyed.
- Number of gallons of water transported to livestock due to water shortages.

More Information

The improvements to ELAP and LIP build on others made since 2021. This includes ELAP benefits for above normal costs for hauling feed and water to livestock and transporting livestock to other grazing acres during a qualifying drought. FSA also [expanded eligible livestock](#) under ELAP, LIP, and the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program, and increased the LIP payment rate for beef, beefalo, bison, and dairy animals less than 250 pounds and most recently beef calves over 800 pounds. Learn about USDA disaster assistance programs on [farmers.gov](#).

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine [disaster protection and recovery](#) program or loan options. For more information about FSA programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Now Accepting Applications for Farm Loans Online

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched an [online application for Direct Loan customers](#). More than 26,000 customers who submit a Direct Loan application each year can now use an online, interactive, guided application that is paperless and provides helpful features including an electronic signature option, the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns, complete a balance sheet and build a farm operating plan. This tool is part of a broader effort by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to streamline its processes, improve customer service, and expand credit access.

The online farm loan application replicates the support an applicant would receive when completing a loan application in person with an FSA Farm Loan Officer, while continuing to provide customers with one-on-one assistance as needed. This tool and other process

improvements allow farmers and ranchers to submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete and withdrawn applications.

Through a personalized dashboard, borrowers can track the progress of their loan application. It can be accessed on farmers.gov or by completing FSA's Loan Assistance Tool at farmers.gov/loan-assistance-tool. To use the online loan application tool, producers must establish a USDA customer account and a [USDA Level 2 eAuthentication \("eAuth"\) account or a Login.gov account](#). For the initial stage, the online application tool is only available for producers who will be, or are currently, operating their farm as an individual. FSA is expanding the tools availability to married couples applying jointly and other legal entities in 2024.

Farm Loan Improvement Efforts

FSA has a significant initiative underway to streamline and automate Farm Loan Program customer-facing business processes. For the over 26,000 producers who submit a Direct Loan application to FSA annually, and its 85,000 Direct Loan borrowers, FSA has made improvements this year, including:

- A [simplified direct loan paper application](#), reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- The [Loan Assistance Tool on farmers.gov](#) that provides customers with an interactive online, step-by-step guide to identifying the Direct Loan products that may be a fit for their business needs and to understanding the application process.

More Information

FSA continues to accept and review individual requests for assistance from borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their direct FSA loans or those who missed a recent installment or are unable to make their next scheduled installment. All requests for assistance must be received by Dec. 31, 2023. For more information, or to submit a request for assistance, producers can contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) or visit farmers.gov/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance.

The Inflation Reduction Act, a historic, once-in-a-generation investment and opportunity for agricultural communities, provided \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain FSA direct and guaranteed loans and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk. Since October 2022, USDA has provided approximately \$1.6 billion in immediate assistance to more than 27,000 financially distressed direct and guaranteed FSA loan borrowers.

USDA Reminds Direct Loan Borrowers of Cash Flow-Based and Extraordinary Measures Assistance Options

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) continues to accept and review individual assistance requests from: (1) direct Farm Loan Programs (FLP) borrowers who missed a recent installment or are unable to make their next scheduled installment, and (2) borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures to avoid delinquency on their direct FLP loans.

FSA direct loan borrowers with qualifying FLP loans who are unable to pay their upcoming installments or have already missed a recent installment payment can request a cash flow analysis from FSA using a recent balance sheet and operating plan to determine their eligibility.

This assistance is currently limited to installments due August 1, 2022, through January 15, 2024.

If FSA determines that a borrower qualifies for cash flow-based assistance due to an inability to develop a feasible plan for the current production cycle, FSA will make a one-time credit to the borrower's account in the amount of the missed or upcoming direct loan installment(s). Consistent with other Section 22006 assistance provided to FSA direct loan borrowers, cash flow-based assistance is only available to borrowers who have not received prior IRA Section 22006 assistance that covered a forward direct loan installment.

Assistance is also available for borrowers who took certain extraordinary measures between February 28, 2020, through October 18, 2022, to avoid delinquency on their loans, such as monetizing long term or essential assets, incurring additional non-FSA debt, or deferring other essential payments, resulting in reduced farm and household viability. If FSA determines that a borrower qualifies for extraordinary measures assistance, the borrower will receive a direct payment equaling the amount of funds obtained through the extraordinary measure(s) that were used to make the payment(s) to FSA, with a maximum payment being the full amount of the installment paid. Borrowers may also be eligible to receive a payment covering their next loan installment due on all FLP direct loans if they have not received prior IRA Section 22006 assistance that covered a forward installment.

Borrowers can submit requests for extraordinary measures or cash flow-based assistance in person at their local FSA office or by sending in a direct request using the farmers.gov 22006 assistance request portals at farmers.gov/loans/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance. All requests for assistance must be received by December 31, 2023.

Borrowers can learn more about extraordinary measures and cash flow-based assistance, including complete eligibility requirements, at farmers.gov/loans/inflation-reduction-investments/assistance.

As USDA learns more about the types of situations financially distressed farmers are facing, the Department will continue to update borrowers and the public about new assistance for distressed borrowers. USDA will also provide regular updates about its progress in deploying this funding to farmers who need it.

Upcoming Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Opportunities

Agriculture brings so much value to our communities, including food production, open space, and economic prosperity. This is true no matter where an agricultural operation is located – whether rural or urban. USDA is committed to working with farms of all sizes and in all locations, including those in urban areas.

Our commitment includes opening new offices and providing staff expertise in urban communities to increase access to services designed to meet the unique operational needs of urban producers. Last month, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced a series of investments](#) in urban agriculture and food and market access, including \$40 million for initiatives supporting urban and suburban producers. As part of that announcement, we are proud to highlight several new services and opportunities that our urban agricultural customers can look forward to and access in 2023 and beyond.

Visiting a New Urban Service Center

USDA works with agricultural producers through a network of more than 2,300 Service Centers nationwide. These Service Centers are where producers can meet face-to-face with Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees to discuss their vision, goals, and ways USDA can help.

We're excited to announce that FSA and NRCS collaborated to open 17 new [Urban Service Centers](#), which will offer personalized assistance with farm loans, conservation, disaster assistance, and risk management programs to producers in and near urban areas and communities. These new Urban Service Centers are located in: Albuquerque, NM; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Cleveland, OH; Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; Grand Rapids, MI; Los Angeles, CA; Oakland, CA; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; New Orleans, LA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; Richmond, VA; and St. Louis, MO.

If you farm in one of these locations, we encourage you to reach out to [your local Urban Service Center staff](#). If not, you can find the Service Center nearest you on our [Service Center Locator](#).

If you're new to working with us, don't worry, we have a [checklist on how to prepare for your visit and what to expect](#).

Serving on an Urban County Committee

Serving on an urban county committee is an important opportunity for urban producers to affect USDA priorities and funding. Urban county committee members make decisions that impact local urban growers, and share information with USDA staff to provide urban producers better and more efficient access to USDA programs and services. Urban county committee members serve as spokespeople on USDA's available resources and encourage and promote urban, indoor, innovative and other emerging agricultural production practices.

This year, USDA is adding 10 new urban county committees to the [17 that currently exist nationwide](#). The cities with new urban county committees will be Boston, MA; Columbia, SC; Denver, CO; Houston, TX; Jackson, MS; Kansas City, MO; Las Vegas, NV; Little Rock, AR; Memphis, TN; and Pittsburgh, PA.

To learn more about county committees, including urban county committees, visit the [county committees webpage](#).

Taking Advantage of Training and Professional Development Opportunities

To make sure that the Urban Service Centers and urban county committees will be as effective as they can be, USDA is partnering with local and national organizations to train

USDA staff about how best to serve urban producers. These organizations will also provide outreach, training, and technical assistance for producers and interested community members in urban areas. More information about professional development opportunities from our partners will be coming shortly.

Currently, USDA offers live and on-demand webinars on topics that are of interest to urban producers, including the [People's Garden webinar series](#), [farm record tutorials](#), and [tax assistance](#) videos.

Learning More about Future Funding and Other Opportunities

USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production publishes a monthly newsletter with resources for urban and innovative producers, including lists of grant and technical assistance programs that are accepting applications. To receive the newsletter, [subscribe to USDA emails on farmers.gov](#) by selecting "Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production" from the list of topics.

The zip code or size of a community should not determine whether families can purchase healthy, locally grown food. Through programs like these, USDA is investing in America's urban and suburban communities and strengthening local food systems. We look forward to building on this great work with future expansions to support our urban customer base.

USDA Provides Local Support for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

The first 10 years of a farming or ranching operation are tough. USDA recognizes you need dedicated support to help make sense of all the information coming your way. Now each state has a Beginning Farmer and Rancher team headed up by a state coordinator. The coordinator helps producers who have operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 years navigate USDA and partner resources.

To find your Texas coordinator, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers/coordinators/. For more beginning farmer and rancher information, visit farmers.gov/newfarmers.

Every Season is Scam Season

Remember to discuss your USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) account information only with people you recognize and trust.

If you have questions about your FSA accounts, including your farm loans, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

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