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Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA Offers Disaster Program Flexibilities for Agricultural Producers Impacted by Recent Wildfires

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Recovery Assistance Available for Livestock, Feed, Forage, and Infrastructure Loss

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, March 8, 2024 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has authorized policy flexibilities for several key disaster assistance programs to aid agricultural producers who have experienced significant livestock, feed, forage and infrastructure loss from recent wildfires.

“I’ve been visiting with ranchers in Texas this week, where more than a million acres of rangeland have already burned, thousands of cattle have been lost and for many in the burn area, their lives and livelihood have been drastically impacted for months and in some cases, years to come.” said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. “It’s through these difficult, often heart-wrenching conversations that we as an agency can make meaningful policy decisions that better meet the unique needs of the producers who participate in our programs. We’re listening closely to what these producers are saying and, where we have the authority to do so, we are revising program provisions to ensure we’re delivering impactful assistance.”

Livestock Disaster Assistance Flexibilities

The [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) provides assistance for livestock losses due to wildfire in excess of normal mortality, including euthanized animals if the death is directly related to the wildfire. LIP also provides assistance to producers who sold livestock injured by the wildfire within 30 days of the end of the disaster event in cases where the sale price is lower than the LIP price.

To participate in LIP, producers will need to provide documentation of death losses and submit a notice of loss to FSA no later than March 3, 2025, for 2024 losses. Examples of acceptable records include but are not limited to documentation of beginning and ending inventory, financial records, pictures with dates, rendering receipts, vet records and third-party certifications in conjunction with

documentation of beginning inventory. In the absence of acceptable records, FSA County Committees can provide further death loss documentation flexibilities.

The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) provides compensation for grazing and feed losses, transportation of water and feed to livestock and hauling livestock to grazing acres. Additional feed purchased above normal due to wildfire is also eligible for ELAP assistance.

Producers are eligible for reimbursement, at \$6.60/mile, for feed, forage and livestock hauled over 25 miles, one way, based on a comparison of hauling over loss period and hauling from the previous two years. ELAP reimbursement costs are limited to 1,000 miles not including the first 25 miles. For 2024, producers who haul water are eligible for 10 cents per gallon.

Conservation Reserve Program Haying/Grazing Flexibilities

FSA expanded authorization of emergency haying and grazing of [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) acres to support the relocation of livestock for grazing purposes. This includes all counties in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming.

Emergency haying and grazing is available until the beginning of the primary nesting season in each state. Expanding emergency haying and grazing of CRP to include a broader geographic area provides livestock producers access to additional eligible acres in advance of the primary nesting season.

Producers incurring increased costs associated with the transportation of livestock to and from CRP for emergency grazing purposes or transportation of CRP hay, one way, may also be eligible for ELAP transportation assistance.

To support areas affected by wildfires, FSA continues to evaluate flexibilities and expanded opportunities to authorize emergency haying and grazing of eligible CRP acres.?

Additional Wildfire Recovery Assistance

FSA's [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) provides landowners with financial and technical assistance to remove debris from farmland, replace watering facilities and repair or replace fences including livestock cross fences, boundary fences, cattle gates or wildlife exclusion fences on agricultural land. To help with implementation, landowners may request an advance payment of up to 25% of expected cost-share for approved ECP applications. ECP cost-share is 90% for underserved producers and 75% for all other producers.

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) helps producers of non-insurable forage and grazing acres to protect against natural disasters, including wildfires, that result in lower yields or crop losses. NAP coverage is available to producers who elected NAP coverage or filed form CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Veteran, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher Certification* prior to the start of the disaster event. For forage losses, NAP provides a yield-based disaster payment and for grazed forage losses, NAP assists with the loss of expected animal unit grazing days.

Disaster Designations/Access to Affordable Financing

On March 1, 2024, an FSA Administrator's Physical Loss Notification (APLN) designation for wildfires and excessive high winds was signed by Administrator Ducheneaux for the following counties:

- Texas Primary counties – Armstrong, Hemphill, Hutchinson, Oldham, Potter
- Texas Contiguous counties – Briscoe, Carson, Deaf Smith, Donley, Gray, Hansford, Hartley, Lipscomb, Moore, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, Wheeler
- New Mexico Contiguous county – Quay
- Oklahoma Contiguous counties – Ellis, Roger Mills

The APLN allows producer in designated primary and contiguous counties to access FSA emergency loans. Physical loss loans can be used to repair or replace damaged or destroyed physical property essential to the success of the agricultural operation, including livestock losses. Examples of property commonly affected include essential farm buildings, fixtures to real estate, equipment, livestock, perennial crops, and harvested or stored crops and hay.

FSA continues to work with affected states to assemble crop loss information and State Emergency Board recommendations necessary to facilitate USDA Secretarial Disaster Designations for affected counties.

In addition to emergency loans, FSA offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#). These loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other needs.

FSA also offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

Interest rates for Operating and Ownership loans including Emergency Loans for?March?2024:

- [Farm Operating Loans](#)(Direct): 4.875%??

- [Farm Ownership Loans](#)(Direct): 5.250%???
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#)(Direct, Joint Financing): 3.250%??
- [Farm Ownership Loans](#)(Down Payment): 1.500%??
- [Emergency Loan](#)(Amount of Actual Loss): 3.750%??

Interest rates for FSA guaranteed loans through commercial lenders are set by the lenders.?????

Online Disaster Recovery Resources

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-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](#).

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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