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Farm Service Agency

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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## Streamlined Delivery of Emergency Relief Programs Is Win-Win for USDA and Agricultural Producers

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Contact:

[FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov](mailto:FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov)

*New Program Outperforms Predecessor Disaster Program in speed of assistance and almost 90% reduced application burden, Online Analytics Now Available*

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4, 2022 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has processed more than 255,000 applications for the new Emergency Relief Program (ERP). USDA has made approximately \$6.1 billion, to date, in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers to help offset eligible losses from qualifying 2020 and 2021 natural disasters. By breaking-down agency barriers, using existing data across USDA and pre-filled applications, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) in cooperation with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) has been able to expediently provide economic relief and save producers and staff over a million hours of time.

"The expedient manner in which these emergency relief programs have been developed and executed ensures swift delivery of program benefits to producers, responsible use of taxpayer dollars and equates to time savings for our customers and for USDA staff," said USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie. "Reducing the time spent collecting information we already have elsewhere at USDA or through crop insurance means our team has more bandwidth to reach and support new customers. Our streamlined, successful ERP implementation is a testament to the USDA team's creativity, dedication, and willingness to break down traditional divisions between agencies and resolve complicated information technology challenges to further the shared goal of better serving farmers and ranchers."

The design of ERP Phase One allowed for an expedited process that saved time for staff and producers. FSA was able to begin disbursing payments to producers within days of rolling out the program when under the predecessor program lengthy applications and processing were required

before making payments. FSA county offices can process almost nine ERP applications in the time it took to process one application for the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program — Plus (WHIP+), the predecessor program for ad hoc disaster assistance. This equates to 88% less time to process applications and a reduction of more than one million staff hours for implementation of ERP compared with WHIP+. While not specifically tracked, we expect the savings for producers to be at least as significant as they previously would have had a significant burden to collect records and often sit across from the local staff as the data is entered.

These process improvements also enhanced the customer experience for farmers by reducing the number of producer trips to FSA county offices and allowing producers to spend less time completing forms so they could focus more on their agricultural operations. In addition, the ERP program design greatly diminished the risk potential for errors and leveraged the existing RMA and Federal Crop Insurance loss adjustment and verification processes. With more applications approved, more dollars distributed, and more dollars paid per application in a shorter timeframe, the streamlined application process developed to deliver ERP has significantly outperformed the previous implementation of WHIP+. FSA also has paid more than \$1 billion to historically underserved producers.

### **Emergency Relief Payments to Date**

The efforts to streamline, improve responsiveness and work across traditional agency-borders goes beyond just the recent ERP process. FSA mailed pre-filled ERP applications to producers of commodities covered by federal crop insurance in late May and has since paid producers with eligible losses more than \$6 billion. Pre-filled ERP applications were mailed to producers with Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage last week, and so far, FSA has already issued \$35.9 million in payments to producers with eligible losses. NAP-related ERP payments also were not factored and are being made, in full, from the start to speed and target assistance to the small and underserved producers that commonly rely on NAP coverage. Also, earlier this year, staff processed more than 100,000 payments through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and paid eligible producers more than \$601.3 million for 2021 grazing losses within days of the program announcement.

### **ERP Data Now Available Online**

A new [public-facing dashboard](#) on the ERP webpage has information on ERP payments that can be sorted by crop type – specialty or non-specialty, specific commodities and state. FSA will update the dashboard on Monday each week.

### **More Information**

ERP and the previously announced ELRP are funded by the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, which President Biden signed into law in 2021. The law provided \$10 billion to help agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disaster events experienced during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

For more information on ERP and ELRP eligibility, program provisions for historically underserved producers as well as Frequently Asked Questions, producers can visit FSA's [Emergency Relief webpage](#).

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](#), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#) and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#). For FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).????

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](#)??

## **Farm Service Agency:**

1400 Independence Ave.  
SW Washington, DC 20250

## **Contact:**

FPAC Press Desk

[FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov](mailto:FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov)