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Farm Service Agency  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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## [U.S. Department of Agriculture Leadership in Georgia Delivers Keynote Address at 2023 Georgia Organics Conference and Expo; Highlights USDA Resources](#)

**News Release | Georgia | February 22, 2023**

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ATHENS, Ga., Feb. 20, 2023 – USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director, Arthur Tripp, recently delivered a keynote address at the 2023 Georgia Organics Conference and Expo in Perry, Georgia where he provided an overview of FSA resources and assistance, including the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) and Microloans.

“Our visit at the Georgia Organics Conference was instrumental in our mission to inform all producers across Georgia about USDA resources that may assist them,” said Tripp. “There has been a growing interest nationwide from both our producers and consumers in organic products. It’s crucial that producers who want to enter this growing market are aware of the resources that the USDA can provide.”

FSA offers financial assistance to organic producers through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program. OCCSP provides organic producers and handlers with financial assistance to reduce the cost of organic certification. The program reimburses producers and handlers for a portion of their paid certification costs. Once certified, organic producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for 50% of certification costs each year, up to a maximum of \$500 per certification scope. The application deadline is Oct. 31, 2023 for expenses paid from Oct. 1, 2022 through Sept. 30, 2023.

Organic certification cost share funds are only available to certified organic producers and handlers. Certification must be provided by a USDA-accredited certifying agent. If your operation is not currently certified organic and you would like to learn more about the certification process, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/organic](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/organic).

Eligible costs for reimbursement include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments, and postage. Ineligible costs include equipment, materials, supplies, transitional certification fees, late fees, and inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations.

Access to capital and financing options are often a challenge for agricultural producers. In addition to the Agency's full portfolio of farm programs and direct and guaranteed operating and ownership farm loans, FSA developed the Microloan Program to better serve the unique financial needs of new, niche, and small to midsized family farm operations. FSA microloans offer more flexible access to credit and serve as an attractive loan alternative for smaller farming operation, like specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA).

The microloan application process is streamlined, requiring less paperwork to complete, consistent with a smaller loan amount. Requirements for managerial experience and loan security have been modified to accommodate veterans, smaller farm operations, and beginning farmers. Applicants may apply for microloans

totaling a combined maximum of \$100,000: up to \$50,000 for a farm ownership loan and up to \$50,000 for an operating loan.

FSA is committed to equitably serving all farmers, rancher, and agricultural partners through commodity price support, conservation, disaster assistance, and loan programs. Georgia's FSA has 67 offices and 333 employees around the state. Producers are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#) and schedule a meeting to determine the programs and loans that best suit their operational goals. During the first visit with FSA, producers should bring documents including proof of identity, proof of ownership, leases, and entity identification status. Producers can visit [Getting Started at Your USDA Service Center](#) on [farmers.gov](#) for more information.

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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