



In This Issue:

- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [Farm Service Agency Seeking Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees](#)
- [Applying for FSA Guaranteed Loans](#)
- [USDA Expands Funding Opportunities for Specialty Crop Growers to Help Offset On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for 2024 and 2025](#)
- [USDA Offers Assistance and Resources for Recovery from and Prevention of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 in Dairy Herds](#)
- [Borrower Training for Farm Loan Customers](#)
- [FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options](#)
- [Highly Erodible Land \(HEL\) and Wetland Conservation Compliance](#)
- [USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids](#)
- [USDA Invests \\$5.2 Million in 17 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Projects](#)

## Dates to Remember

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| August 1  | <a href="#">County Committee Nomination Deadline</a>   |
| August 14 | <a href="#">Deadline for 2022 Emergency Relief Program Assistance</a>                                    |
| Sept 2    | All Offices Closed for Labor Day   |
| Sept 30   | Deadline to Purchase NAP for value loss crops and perennial forage <a href="#">NAP Coverage Deadline</a> |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Sept 30 | <b>Acreage and Inventory Reporting Deadline for all value loss crops except Nursery Production</b> |
| Oct 31  | <b>Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) Deadline</b>                                   |

## Farm Service Agency Seeking Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2024.

Elections for committee members will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a geographic information system locator tool available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
- 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, women, urban 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 recovery, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues.

### Urban and Suburban County Committees

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees and 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 that work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices.

Additionally, the county committees may address 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 provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs, serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

The 27 cities with urban county committees are listed at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections) and [farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban). Of these, ten urban county committees will hold an inaugural election this cycle.

You should contact your local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in your county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, you must be registered and sign an [FSA-669A](#) nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections).

All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug. 1, 2024, deadline. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November 2024.

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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 \$2,236,000. 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 county USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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# USDA Expands Funding Opportunities for Specialty Crop Growers to Help Offset On-Farm Food Safety Expenses for 2024 and 2025

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding the [Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops \(FSCSC\) program](#) to now include medium-sized businesses in addition to small businesses. Eligible specialty crop growers can apply for assistance for expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification. The program has also been expanded to include assistance for 2024 and 2025 expenses. Producers can apply for assistance on their calendar year 2024 expenses beginning July 1, 2024, through Jan. 31, 2025. For program year 2025, the application period will be Jan. 1, 2025, through Jan. 31, 2026.

## Program Details

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

Eligible FSCSC applicants must be a specialty crop operation; meet the definition of a small or medium-size business and have paid eligible expenses related to certification.

- A small business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops sold by the applicant during the three-year period preceding the program year of no more than \$500,000.
- A medium size business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops the applicant sold during the three-year period preceding the program year of at least \$500,001 but no more than \$1,000,000.

Specialty crop operations can receive the following cost assistance:

- 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.
- Training

FSCSC payments are calculated separately for each eligible cost category. Details about payment rates and limitations are available at [farmers.gov/food-safety](https://farmers.gov/food-safety).

## Applying for Assistance

Interested applicants have until Jan. 31, 2025, to apply for assistance for 2024 eligible expenses. FSA will issue payments as applications are processed and approved. For

program year 2025, the application period will be January 1, 2025, through January 31, 2026. FSA will issue 50% of the calculated payment for program year 2025 following application approval, with the remaining amount to be paid after the application deadline. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Specialty crop producers can apply by completing the [FSA-888-1](#), *Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) for Program Years 2024 and 2025* application. The application, along with the [AD-2047](#), *Customer Data Worksheet* and [SF-3881](#), *ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form*, if not already on file with FSA, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. Alternatively, producers with an eAuthentication account can apply for FSCSC [online](#). Producers interested in creating an eAuthentication account should visit [farmers.gov/sign-in](https://farmers.gov/sign-in).

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

### **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](#). Producers without an account can [sign up today](#).

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## **USDA Offers Assistance and Resources for Recovery from and Prevention of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 in Dairy Herds**

### ***USDA is helping producers affected by H5N1, including expanding its [ELAP Program to Help Dairy Producers Offset Milk Losses](#)***

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), also known as H5N1, in dairy cattle in 12 states including Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. To protect the U.S. livestock industry from the threat posed by HPAI H5N1 USDA is taking a number of actions with our federal partners.

On April 24, APHIS announced a federal order that includes mandatory testing for interstate movement of dairy cattle and mandatory reporting of influenza A detections in livestock. In addition to the Federal Order mandates, USDA provides several voluntary testing and monitoring options, including the [HPAI Dairy Herd Status Program](#) announced on May 31, 2024. APHIS has released a list of [requirements and recommendations](#) that apply to interstate moving of lactating dairy cattle, [testing guidance](#) for livestock, and answers to [frequently asked questions](#). Producers are encouraged to visit the APHIS HPAI Livestock Detection [website](#) for information about these programs and requirements,

as well as the most comprehensive and timely updates about this rapidly evolving situation.

## **Assistance for Milk Loss**

### *Confirmed H5N1 Positive Test Results Required for Recovery Assistance*

Producers who incur milk losses in their dairy herds due to HPAI H5N1 can now apply for financial assistance through the USDA's updated Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) expanded ELAP policy through the rule-making process to assist with financial losses resulting from reduced milk production when cattle are removed from commercial milking in dairy herds having a confirmed positive H5N1 test. Positive tests must be confirmed through the USDA's APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

To apply, **producers need to submit** the following to FSA:

- Proof of herd infection through a confirmed positive H5N1 test (based on USDA's APHIS [H5N1 case definition](#)) on individual animal or bulk tank samples confirmed by APHIS' NVSL;
- A notice of loss indicating the date when the loss is apparent, which is the sample collection date for the positive H5N1 test; and
- An application for payment certifying the number of eligible adult dairy cows removed from production, the month the cows were removed from production, and the producer's share in the milk production.

The final date to file a notice of loss and application for payment for eligible losses is 30 days after the end of the prior calendar year, which is **January 30**.

**Note:** *To determine livestock and producer eligibility for ELAP H5N1 assistance, to submit an application or if you've not previously conducted business with FSA, contact your local FSA county office for details. [Find your local office](#). Other online resources include [frequently asked questions](#) and a [fact sheet](#).*

## **Loans for Biosecurity Implementation**

FSA also provides direct and guaranteed loans for farmers and ranchers that can assist with implementation of biosecurity measures for their operations. Loans can assist with:

- Installing physical barriers to facilitate quarantine, to prevent livestock interaction with wildlife, and to prevent unauthorized access by visitors
- Purchase of disinfectant, footbaths, and disposable footwear and clothing;
- Veterinary costs related to vaccination and general animal health;
- Testing of feed and water sources for toxins and other disease;
- Costs associated with responsible manure disposal and management;
- Costs associated with cleaning and disinfecting livestock transportation equipment; and

- Other biosecurity measures recommended by USDA or other applicable agencies.

To learn more about loans, producers can use the:

[Loan Assistance Tool](#) – helps producers better navigate the farm loan process. The online Loan Assistance Tool provides producers needing agricultural financing with an interactive, step-by-step guide.

- [Farm Loans Overview Factsheet](#) – provides an overview of all FSA direct and guaranteed loans, and eligibility requirements.
- [Farm Loans Homepage](#) – gives in-depth farm loan information, including fact sheets, for those who don't want to use the online Loan Assistance Tool.

To learn more about ELAP or farm loans, producers should contact the FSA at the [local USDA Service Center](#).

To learn more about APHIS requirements and resources, visit APHIS' [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock webpage](#).

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## Borrower Training for Farm Loan Customers

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency (FSA) customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicants develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.

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## FSA Offers Loan Servicing Options

There are options for Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about your options.

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## Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation Compliance

Landowners and operators are reminded that in order to receive payments from USDA, compliance with Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions

are required. Farmers with HEL determined soils are reminded of tillage, crop residue, and rotation requirements as specified per their conservation plan. Producers are to notify the USDA Farm Service Agency prior to breaking sod, clearing land (tree removal), and of any drainage projects (tiling, ditching, etc.) to ensure compliance. Failure to update certification of compliance, with [form AD-1026](#), triggering applicable HEL and/or wetland determinations, for any of these situations, can result in the loss of FSA farm program payments, FSA farm loans, NRCS program payments, and premium subsidy to Federal Crop Insurance administered by RMA.

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## USDA's Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids

USDA has launched **“SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids,”** to help tackle childhood hunger during the summer months. Families now have more choices and convenience to support their children and teens’ nutrition needs with the new SUN Bucks, SUN Meals, and previously launched SUN Meals To-Go options. These programs offer free summer meals for kids 18 and under and new grocery benefits for eligible school-aged kids. For more information visit the website:

Visit USDA’s SUN Programs - [SUNS Program Website](#) to find out more and see what’s available in your community.

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## USDA Invests \$5.2 Million in 17 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Projects

USDA announced the selection of 17 new grant recipients for more than \$5.2 million in Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) grants through the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). Selected grant recipients, including The Ecology School in Maine, will increase food production and access in economically distressed communities, provide job training and education, and allow partners to develop business plans and zoning proposals.

Learn more at [usda.gov/urban](https://usda.gov/urban). For additional resources available to producers, download the [Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure](#) or visit [farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban).

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Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any meeting/event/function should contact Mary Anne Coffin at 207-990-9140 or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.





## Maine /USDA Service Center

967 Illinois Avenue  
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### **Farm Service Agency**

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