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## July: Colorado USDA Newsletter

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Colorado USDA Newsletter - July 12, 2024

Farm Service Agency | Natural Resources Conservation Service | Risk Management Agency

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## Updates to Acreage Reporting and Prevented Planted Acres

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) made several policy updates to acreage reporting and prevented planted acres.

### **USDA Reminds Producers to File Crop Acreage Reports**

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their [crop acreage reports](#) after spring planting should make an appointment with their local county Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the JULY 15, 2024 deadline.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch, its intended use and location. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

### **Prevented Planted Acres**

In order to certify prevented planted acreage due to drought, all of the following must apply:

- The area that is prevented from being planted has insufficient soil moisture for germination of seed on the final planting date for non-irrigated acreage

- Prolonged precipitation deficiencies that meet the D3 or D4 level as determined by the U.S. Drought Monitor
- Verifiable information must be collected from sources whose business or purpose is recording weather conditions as determined by FSA and the sources include, but are not limited to:
  - S. National Weather Service
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - S. Army Corps of Engineers
  - National Institute of Food and Agriculture
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - Local irrigation authorities responsible for water allocations
  - State Department of Water Resources
  - National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Other sources responsible for the collection of water data or regulation of water resources (water allocations).

FSA reminds producers to report prevented planted and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs. You should report crop acreage you intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, *Notice of Loss*, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

#### **Late-Filed Acreage Reports**

FSA can now accept late-filed acreage reports without a field visit if the producer can provide proof of existence and disposition. Producers are required to pay the late filed fee.

Proof of existence of the crop includes, but is not limited to:

- seed receipts showing the amount, variety, and date purchased;
- receipts for cleaning, treating, etc., for seed planted on the farm;
- a written contract or documentation of an oral contract to produce a specific crop;
- evidence that was accepted and approved by the RMA or another USDA agency;
- precision planting, spraying, or harvesting geospatial data or maps;
- drone photos with location and notable physical boundaries;
- other aerial or ground imagery with the ability to determine date, acres, and crop.

Proof of disposition of the crop includes, but is not limited to:

- receipts showing number and units sold if the sale can be positively identified as sale of the crop for the farm for the year represented;
- a written contract or documentation of an oral contract to produce a specific crop;
- records showing the crop was fed to livestock;
- documentation of payment for custom harvesting indicating acreage, location, and crop year;
- evidence that was accepted and approved by another USDA agency.

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## **USDA RMA Expands Insurance Options for Specialty and Organic Growers**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is expanding crop insurance options for specialty and organic growers beginning with the 2025 crop year. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is expanding coverage options by allowing enterprise units by organic farming practice, adding enterprise unit eligibility for several crops, and making additional policy updates. This is the first of several announcements this summer, which will include the expansion of the shellfish policy in the Northeast and new coverage for grape growers in the West and beyond. These expansions and other improvements build on other recent RMA efforts to better serve specialty crop producers and reach a broader group of producers.

The following changes will be made beginning with the 2025 crop year:

- **Enterprise and Optional Units:**
  - Expand Enterprise Units (EU) to almonds, apples, avocado (California), citrus (Arizona, California, and Texas), figs, macadamia nuts, pears, prunes, and walnuts.

- Allow non-contiguous parcels of land that qualify for Optional Units (OU) to also qualify for EU.
- Allow EUs by organic farming practice for alfalfa seed, almonds, apples, avocado (California), cabbage, canola, citrus (Arizona, California and Texas), coarse grains, cotton, ELS cotton, dry beans, dry peas, figs, fresh market tomatoes, forage production, grass seed, macadamia nuts, millet, mint, mustard, pears, potatoes (northern, central, and southern), processing tomatoes, prunes, safflower, small grains, sunflower seed, and walnuts.
- Expand OUs by organic practice to all remaining crops where OUs are available, and the organic practice is insurable.
- **Walnut Quality Adjustment:** Allow sunburned damaged walnuts to be eligible for indemnity payments through quality adjustment.
- **Almond Leaf Year:** Expand insurance coverage to younger trees by including trees in their fifth leaf year after being set out.
- **Processing Bean End of Insurance Period:** Extend insurance coverage in Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey by an additional 16 days.
- **Canola:** Expand insurance for canola into South Dakota and Michigan.

These revisions come through the [Expanding Options for Specialty and Organic Growers Final Rule](#) published today by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC). This Final Rule will update the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions, Area Risk Protection Insurance Basic Provisions, and includes changes to individual Crop Provisions. The enterprise unit availability will continue to be rolled out throughout the year with each crop's contract change date and RMA will continue to evaluate expanding EUs to additional crops.

Additional changes in the June 30 Final Rule include:

- **New Breaking Acreage:**
  - Reduce administrative burdens on growers and the delivery system by removing written agreement requirements on new breaking acreage.
  - Reduce coverage penalties on perennial specialty crop producers and producers of intensively managed crops, such as alfalfa, when they move to row crop production. This allows for a seamless transition without losing crop insurance coverage.
- **Assignment of Indemnity:** Provide flexibility for an indemnity payment to be issued via automated clearing house (ACH) or other electronic means when these methods do not allow for multiple payees.
- **Good Farming Practices (GFP):** Streamline and shorten the FCIC GFP reconsideration process by closing the administrative file following FCIC's initial GFP determination.
- **Double Cropping and Annual Forage:** Clarify a producer must prove insurance history for the annual forage crop and meet the current double cropping requirements to receive a full prevented planting payment.

RMA continues to explore ways to improve risk management tools for specialty crop producers and will be announcing additional program enhancements later this summer. Some of those improvements include:

- Expanding the **Shellfish Program** to an additional 18 counties in seven states. Additional modifications include allowing insurance on seeds initially purchased smaller than 4 mm, allowing producers to use existing records for coverage in adjacent program counties, and allowing alternative yield procedures.
- Piloting the **Fire Insurance Protection – Smoke Index (FIP-SI)** crop insurance program for grapes in California for the 2025 crop year. The pilot program is an index-based endorsement to the Actual Production History (APH) Grape policy that provides additional protection against smoke damage and covers the liability between the APH policy's coverage level and 95%.
- Expanding the **Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO)** to walnuts and citrus crops and increasing premium support to be consistent with the Supplemental Coverage Option.
- Expanding the **Grapevine** insurance program to an additional 29 counties in California. Grapevine insurance offers protection against vine losses in the event of several named perils.
- Releasing new **Organic Practice Guidelines** to producers for the 2025 crop year. These guidelines are to help producers report planted or perennial acreage insured under a certified organic or transitional practice.

#### More Information

This announcement further advances USDA's recently announced [Specialty Crops Competitiveness Initiative](#), a Department-wide effort to increase the competitiveness of

specialty crops products in foreign markets, enhance domestic marketing, and improve production and processing practices.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov) or by contacting your [RMA Regional Office](#).

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## 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](http://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](http://fsa.usda.gov/elections) and [farmers.gov/urban](http://farmers.gov/urban). Of these, ten urban county committees will hold an inaugural election this cycle, including Denver!

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](http://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

## 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.

### Communication Is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be successful. FSA staff will provide guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial credit. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses
- The development of problem situations
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

For more information on FSA farm loan programs visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

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## Tree Assistance Program

If you're an orchardist or nursery tree grower who experienced losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2024, you must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.

TAP provides financial assistance to help you replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster, plus an adjustment for normal mortality. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which you can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 1,000 acres annually.

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

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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## **SAVE THE DATE: USDA Beginner Farmer and Rancher Webinar - NRCS Technical and Financial Assistance for Producers and Forest Landowners**

Mark your calendar and join us for our monthly USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher webinar. These informational virtual events are held from 12:00pm to 1:30pm, and this session, USDA will discuss: **Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical and Financial Assistance for Producers and Forest Landowners**.

Join us for an informative webinar to discuss how NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers and forest landowners. Learn about conservation practices, funding opportunities, and strategies to address natural resource concerns that you can immediately apply. Whether you're a farmer, rancher, forest steward, or urban producer, this webinar will provide valuable insights on enhancing sustainability and protecting our environment.

**Key Topics:**

- Overview of NRCS programs
- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) for soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat
- Financial incentives for implementing conservation practices.

**UPDATED Registration:** <https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/4630d7f8-ca6c-4ce6-b13a-ba36b6e17b2c@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from experts and connect with fellow land stewards!

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