



In This Issue:

- [Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines](#)
- [From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks](#)
- [Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage Beginning Feb. 28](#)
- [FWP Announces CRP ADD-ON Lease Enrollment Period](#)
- [Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Montana](#)
- [USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service](#)
- [USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service](#)
- [Intertribal Agriculture Council \(IAC\) for the Rocky Mountain Region Reminds MT Producers about Meat-2-Market Webinar](#)
- [Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend April Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production](#)
- [USDA NASS Starting Weekly Crop Progress Survey](#)

Montana FSA Program Dates/Deadlines

USDA in Montana reminds agricultural producers of important Farm Service Agency (FSA) program dates. Contact your local service center to apply and with any questions. Visit online at farmers.gov and fsa.usda.gov/mt.

April 29, 2024: End of enrollment period for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), an important safety net program offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences.

July 15, 2024: Acreage reporting date for spring seeded alfalfa seed not covered by NAP, annual forage seeding, CRP, perennial forage not covered under NAP and all other crops not required to be reported by a previous reporting date.

August 1, 2024: Deadline to request a farm reconstitution or farm transfer for 2024.

Sept. 2, 2024: NAP application closing date for fall and spring seeded Canola and all Value Loss Crops.

Sept. 30, 2024: NAP application closing date for all annual & perennial grass & mixed forage, garlic, rye, speltz, triticale & wheat. Please note that the acreage reporting date for your NAP covered crops is the earlier of the established FSA acreage reporting date for the crop or 15 calendar days before the onset of harvest or grazing of the specific crop acreage being reported.
Nov. 1: Last day of 2023 CRP Summer/Fall Non-Emergency Grazing Period (prior approval required)

[Back to top](#)

From the Desk of the SED: Maureen Wicks

We are so thankful for the spring moisture that has been spreading over Montana. We also hope that the ground becomes favorable for our producers to get into their fields to start planting. With that in mind, I encourage you to keep track of these spring planting dates for when you visit one of the many USDA Farm Service Agency Service Centers across Montana.

To be eligible for many USDA programs, including drought disaster relief programs and risk management programs, agricultural producers must file timely [acreage reports](#) that document the crops grown on their farm or ranch and their intended uses. FSA staff at [local USDA Service Centers](#) will provide producers with maps and acreage reporting deadlines, by crop, for their county.

Thank you for your commitment to agriculture. It truly is an honor to serve you.

[Back to top](#)

Dairy Producers Can Enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage Beginning Feb. 28

As of February 28, 2024, dairy producers will be able to enroll for 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), an important safety net program offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides producers with price support to help offset milk and feed price differences. This year's DMC signup begins Feb. 28, 2024, and ends April 29, 2024. For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may begin as soon as March 4, 2024, for any payments that triggered in January 2024. [Read the full news release here.](#)

For more information on DMC, visit the [DMC webpage](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

[Back to top](#)

FWP Announces CRP ADD-ON Lease Enrollment Period

Application deadline is April 19, 2024

Agricultural producers with land enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are

invited to apply for enrollment in Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' CRP Add-on Lease option. This option is designed to benefit producers while also providing habitat for upland game birds and other wildlife and also giving game bird hunters more places to hunt.

The CRP Add-on Lease option is offered through FWP's Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program and is available to private landowners, including landowners with land enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program, and public land lessees. New this year, up to 640 CRP acres per landowner or lessee may be enrolled.

Participants receive an annual payment based on \$10 per CRP-acre each year the CRP is enrolled in the federal program. Producers applying for enrollment during the 2024 general CRP sign-up are encouraged to apply even though they might not know their federal enrollment status until September.

In addition to rental payments, producers may also qualify for financial incentives to conduct specific mid-contract management activities, such as light disking, with prior approval through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Producers who are seeding CRP this year may also qualify for a bonus payment of \$10 per CRP-acre.

All enrollments must be on land that is legally accessible. Landowners must agree to allow free public walk-in game bird hunting without further permission unless land is enrolled in Block Management. CRP Add-on Leases allow for haying or grazing once in five years and must be pre-approved by the USDA Farm Services Agency.

Applications for enrollment in the CRP Add-on Lease option may be submitted now through **April 19, 2024**. For more information and an application, visit FWP online at the [Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program](#) web page and then click "CRP Add-on Lease option." Because of limited funding, FWP encourages producers to submit their application early.

[Back to top](#)

Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Montana

Farmers in Montana can now access county specific farming data and USDA resources all in one place via the [new farmers.gov local dashboard](#). Your farmers.gov local dashboard includes farming data and USDA resources including USDA news, commodity pricing, weather forecasts, historical climate data, past storm events, USDA service center locator and additional state resources for Montana and your county. The dashboard transforms complex data sets into easy-to-read charts and graphs to help you quickly find information that matters to you. [<link to farmers.gov>](#)

[Back to top](#)

USDA Develops Simplified Direct Loan Application to Improve Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form were available starting March 1, 2023.

Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The simplified direct loan application and Loan Assistance Tool are the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their [local USDA Service Center](#).

[Back to top](#)

USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched a new online tool to help farmers and ranchers better navigate the farm loan application process. This uniform application process will help to ensure all farm loan applicants receive equal support and have a consistent customer experience with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) regardless of their individual circumstances.

USDA experiences a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, particularly among underserved customers, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. The Loan Assistance Tool is available 24/7 and gives customers an online step-by-step guide that supplements the support they receive when working in person with a USDA employee, providing materials that may help an applicant prepare their loan application in one tool.

Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. From here they can follow the prompts to complete the Eligibility Self-Assessment and start the farm loan journey. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser, and is fully functional on mobile devices. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The Loan Assistance Tool is the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements and tools that launched in 2023 include:

- A streamlined and simplified direct loan application, reduced from 29 pages to 13 pages.
- An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.
- An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

Background

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA is taking action to immediately [provide relief to qualifying distressed borrowers](#) whose operations are at financial risk while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

[Back to top](#)

Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) for the Rocky Mountain Region Reminds MT Producers about Meat-2-Market Webinar

Join IAC April 22nd, 2024 for the **Meat 2 Market Webinar, "Social Media, ECommerce Sales & Newsletter/Email Marketing. Integrating online and offline marketing and sales tactics"** Social media and email marketing are crucial tools for communicating, bridging the gap between business and consumer in an online exchange. In this course, we will take a look into social media and email marketing as a means of conveying your brand identity through storytelling to reach

your ideal consumer. We will examine different social media case studies from indigenous producers, learn best practices and strategies for social media and email marketing, and explore how these contribute to the overall online marketing funnel. Finally, this course will take a brief look at ecommerce best practices, providing you with tools to use in developing your own online marketing strategies.

Click this link to register for the event: <https://bit.ly/M2M-APR22>

Please reach out to your Montana IAC Points of Contact if you have any questions:

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[Back to top](#)

Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend April Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on April 10 from 2-4 p.m. Eastern.

Meeting details can be viewed in the [Federal Register Notice](#). Written comments can be submitted via UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov by April 24 at 11:59 p.m. The Committee will deliberate and vote on proposed recommendations and address public comments during the meeting. USDA will share the agenda between 24 to 48 hours prior to the meeting on the [Committee's webpage](#).

The Committee is managed by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and was established through the 2018 Farm Bill and is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture.

[Learn more or register.](#)

[Back to top](#)

USDA NASS Starting Weekly Crop Progress Survey

In April, USDA NASS will be starting the Weekly Crop Progress Survey. NASS surveys the MSU County Extension Agents and FSA CED's. NASS follows the crops and conditions of the crops through the crop year.

NASS would like to remind you that any data reported to NASS is confidential and no individual data is ever published or publicly available. All NASS reports are released according to a calendar located on our website [USDA - National Agricultural Statistics Service - Publications - Report by Date](#).

Thank you, producers, for taking the time to share your story. To find results of NASS surveys please visit https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Montana/index.php

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Eric Sommer State Statistician, Montana at 1-800-392-3202.

[Back to top](#)



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Contact information for your local office, visit: www.farmers.gov.

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