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## **USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Wisconsin Farmers and Livestock Producers Impacted by Drought**

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**MADISON, Wis., July 25, 2023** – Agricultural operations in Wisconsin are experiencing severe and worsening drought conditions. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover. Impacted producers should contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages.

“Production agriculture is vital to the economic well-being of communities across Wisconsin, and USDA stands ready to help farmers, ranchers, and foresters as they work to recover from severe drought conditions,” said Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). “USDA employees are working diligently to deliver FPAC’s extensive portfolio of disaster assistance programs and services to all impacted agricultural producers.”

### **USDA Disaster Recovery Assistance**

Livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land may be eligible for the 2023 [Livestock Forage Disaster Program \(LFP\)](#). To participate in LFP producers must own, cash lease, or contract grow eligible livestock, provide pasture or grazing land to eligible livestock on the beginning date of the qualifying drought, certify that they

suffered a grazing loss due to drought, and submit an acreage report to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) for all grazing land for which a grazing loss is being claimed. FSA maintains a list of [counties eligible for LFP](#) and makes updates each Thursday.

Meanwhile, the [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed losses as well as water hauling expenses associated with transportation of water to livestock and transporting livestock to forage or other grazing acres. For ELAP, producers will need to file a notice of loss within 30 days and honeybee losses within 15 days.

Additionally, eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, or vines lost during the drought. This complements [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) or crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases. For TAP, a program application must be filed within 90 days.

“Once you are able to evaluate the drought impact on your operation, this may be fewer bales of hay harvested, fewer grazing days on pasture, or need to haul water; however, the drought has impacted your farm, be sure to contact your local FSA office to timely report all crop and livestock damages and losses,” said Gene Schriefer, State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Wisconsin. “To expedite FSA disaster assistance, you will likely need to provide documents, such as farm records, herd or other livestock inventory, receipts, and pictures of damages or losses.”

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed [farm loans](#), including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers who cannot secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest [emergency loans](#) to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs like livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts, and other needs. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.

## **Risk Management**

Producers who have risk protection through [federal crop insurance](#) or FSA's [NAP](#) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss](#) (CCC-576) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours.

"Crop insurance and other USDA risk management options are offered to help producers manage risk because we never know what nature has in store for the future," said Pamela Stahlke, Director of RMA's Regional Office that covers Wisconsin. "The Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events."

Producers who have not applied for NAP coverage may still be covered. FSA has [updated NAP](#) to remove barriers and establish procedures through which an underserved producer with a CCC-860, *Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification* on file prior to the applicable NAP application closing date will automatically receive basic coverage for any NAP-eligible crops. Like all NAP-covered producers, underserved producers will still need to file a notice of loss and apply for program benefits.

## **Conservation**

FSA's [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) assists landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to restore fencing, remove debris, replace damaged irrigation system, land leveling and more. FSA has updated ECP policy to permit advance payments up to 25% of costs for all ECP practices.

FSA's [Conservation Reserve Program](#) authorizes producers to conduct [emergency haying and grazing](#) activities during times of drought. Grazing activities can occur during the Primary Nesting Season (May 15 through August 1), while producers are first eligible to hay beginning August 2. Producers must request and receive approval from the Farm Service Agency before beginning any activities.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help farmers make their operation more resilient in the face of drought in future years. Through conservation

planning and practices that will improve soil health and water conservation, farmers can reduce future crop loss due to drought and enhance resiliency to changing climatic conditions. Financial help for implementing conservation practices may be available through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) or the [Agricultural Management Assistance](#) program.

Long-term damage from drought can include forage production loss in pastures and fields and increased wind erosion on crop fields not protected with soil health practices. Producers can visit their local USDA Service Center to learn more about these impacts, potential recovery tactics and how to take steps to make their land more resilient to drought in the future.

“USDA can be a very valuable partner to help landowners with their recovery and resiliency efforts,” said Tyrone Larson, NRCS State Conservationist in Wisconsin. “Our staff will work one-on-one with landowners to make assessments of the damages and develop approaches that focus on effective recovery of the land.”

### **More Information**

On [farmers.gov](#), the [Drought Webpage](#), [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Loan Assistance Tool](#) can help producers and landowners determine program or loan options. For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#). For FSA and NRCS programs, they should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In 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 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 [www.usda.gov](#).

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