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USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in West Virginia Impacted by Drought

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Morgantown, W.V., August 20, 2024 – Agricultural operations in West Virginia have been significantly impacted by recent drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events. 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.

USDA Disaster 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 2024 [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 above normal costs of hauling water and feed to livestock as well as transporting livestock to

forage or other grazing acres. For ELAP, producers are required to complete a notice of loss and a payment application to their local FSA office no later than the annual program application deadline, Jan. 30, 2025, for 2024 calendar year losses.

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. TAP complements the [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 of the disaster event or the date when the loss of the trees, bushes or vines is apparent.

“Once you are able to evaluate the drought impact on your operation, be sure to contact your [local FSA county office](#) to timely report all crop and livestock damages and losses,” said John Perdue, State Executive Director for FSA in West Virginia. “To expedite FSA disaster assistance, you will likely need to provide documents, such as farm records, herd 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 unable to 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 offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency 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 provide a notice of loss to their agent within 72 hours of initial discovery of damage 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 Alexander Sereno, Director of USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) Regional Office that covers West Virginia. “Times of disaster can be a trying time for producers, and they should stay in close contact with their crop insurance agent. Producers can be assured that the Approved Insurance Providers, loss adjusters and agents are experienced and well-trained in handling these types of events.”

Conservation

FSA’s [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP) can assist landowners and forest stewards with financial and technical assistance to implement emergency water conservation measures, restore fencing, remove debris, replace damaged irrigation system, land leveling and more.

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](#).

Long-term damage from drought can include forage production loss in pastures and fields and decreased crop yields on 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.

“The Natural Resources Conservation Service can be a very valuable partner to help landowners with their recovery and resiliency efforts,” said Jon Bourdon, NRCS State Conservationist in West Virginia. “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

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by drought. Those resources include the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), [Loan Assistance Tool](#), and [Natural Disasters and Crop Insurance fact sheet](#). Additionally, FarmRaise offers an [FSA educational hub](#) with LIP and ELAP decision tools as well as farm loan resource videos. For FSA and NRCS programs, producers should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#). For assistance with a crop insurance claim, producers and landowners should contact their [crop insurance agent](#).

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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