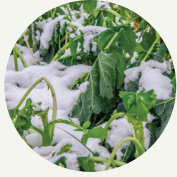




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# MMFA Hot Topics

**"Farming is the way we GROW!"**  
(God, Resources, Opportunity, Willpower)

## USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers



USDA will invest \$75 million in additional funding for the Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach program.

USDA is committed to delivering financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers who have been impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. Through our new initiative – USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers – USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion towards new programs to reach a broad set of producers.

### Active Application Periods

USDA's Farm Service Agency is currently accepting proposals for cooperative

agreements to establish partnerships with organizations to provide outreach and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Proposals are due May 5, 2021. View the cooperative agreement opportunity on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

The sign-up period for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 is currently open. Visit [farmers.gov/cfap](https://www.farmers.gov/cfap) to learn more.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

announced the USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative on March 24, 2021. The initiative will reach a broader set of producers than in previous COVID-19 aid programs. USDA is dedicating at least \$6 billion toward the new programs and will also develop rules for new programs that will put a greater emphasis on outreach to small and socially disadvantaged producers, specialty crop and organic producers, timber harvesters, and support for the food supply chain and producers of renewable energy, among others.

Moving forward, USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers will utilize existing programs and services to enhance educational and market opportunities for agricultural producers. Learn more about our ongoing initiatives and future plans below. Visit this page frequently for the latest updates on this critical initiative to support as many producers as possible, as equitably as possible.

### Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

USDA is implementing updates to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) for producers of agricultural commodities marketed in 2020 who faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) reopened sign-up for CFAP 2 for at least 60 days beginning on April

**USDA Pandemic Assistance,  
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5, 2021. CFAP updates also include:

- **An increase in CFAP 1 payment rates for cattle.** USDA estimates additional payments of more than \$1.1 billion to more than 410,000 producers.
- **Additional CFAP 2 assistance of \$20 per acre for producers of eligible flat-rate or price-trigger crops.** USDA estimates additional payments of more than \$4.5 billion to more than 560,000 producers.
- **Processing of eligible payments for CFAP Additional Assistance.** USDA will finalize routine decisions and minor formula adjustments on applications and begin processing payments for certain applications filed for this program.

FSA is committed to improving outreach on programs, including CFAP, and will establish partnerships with organizations with strong connections to socially disadvantaged communities. FSA is now accepting proposals for cooperative agreements from organizations who can assist in this effort. Learn more about these agreements below.

Visit [farmers.gov/cfap](https://farmers.gov/cfap) for more information on the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, including eligible commodities, producer eligibility, payment limitations and structure, and options to apply.

### **Investing \$6 Billion to Expand Help and Assistance to More Producers**

USDA will dedicate at least \$6 billion to develop new programs or modify existing proposals using remaining discretionary funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act. These efforts will include assistance for:

- Dairy farmers through the Dairy Donation Program or other means.
- Euthanized livestock and poultry.
- Biofuels.
- Specialty crops; beginning farmers; and local, urban, and organic farms.
- Costs for organic certification or to continue or add conservation activities.
- Other possible expansion and corrections to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program such as to support dairy or other livestock producers.
- Timber harvesting and hauling.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other protective measures for food and farm

workers and specialty crops and seafood processors and distributors.

- Improving the resilience of the food supply chain.
- Developing infrastructure to support donation and distribution of perishable commodities, including food donation and distribution through farm-to-school, restaurants, or other community organizations.
- Reducing food waste.

### **Adding \$500 Million of New Funding to Existing Programs**

USDA expects to invest approximately \$500 million in expedited assistance through several existing programs and services. Click to learn more about funding and assistance through each of the below.

### **Cooperative Agreements to Support Socially Disadvantaged Producers Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach Program

USDA will invest \$75 million in additional funding for the Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach program.

The Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach program, administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and USDA's Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), encourages and assists socially disadvantaged, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers in the ownership and operation of farms and ranches. Learn more about this program at [nifa.usda.gov](https://nifa.usda.gov).

### **Local Agricultural Marketing Program Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

# **American Rescue Plan Debt Payments FAQ**



Pelosi & Schumer sign the American Rescue Plan Act  
Photo: Olivier Douliery/AFP via Getty Images

Last Updated: April 12, 2021

## **Eligible Producers**

### **Question 1: How does USDA define a socially disadvantaged producer?**

- The [American Rescue Plan Act](#) uses Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 as the definition of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, which includes those who identify as one or more of the following: Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Section 2501 does not include gender. While some women may be eligible due to their race or ethnicity, gender is not an eligible criterion in and of itself, based on the law enacted by Congress.

### **Question 2: I was a successful claimant in a class action settlement (e.g., Pigford, Keepseagle, Garcia), and received debt forgiveness. I have secured one of the eligible loans, do I still qualify?**

- Yes, if you have eligible indebtedness as of January 1, 2021. (See "Eligible Loans" below.)

### **Question 3: I had a direct or guaranteed farm loan in the past but lost the farm and do not have current debt. Am I eligible for relief?**

- If you do not have a current farm loan, you are not eligible for debt relief under Section

**American Rescue Plan Debt Payments,**  
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1005, however you may be eligible to benefit from assistance provided in Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan. USDA is actively working to establish a process for providing assistance to former borrowers that are socially disadvantaged based on race and ethnicity. Details will be shared as soon as a process is established.

### Eligible Loans

#### Question 4: What loans are eligible for payments under the American Rescue Plan?

- Eligible loans include:
  1. Direct loans by FSA, including Farm Storage Facility Loans, Direct Farm Ownership Loans, Farm Operating Loans (this includes Microloans and Youth Loans), Emergency Loans, Conservation Loans, and Soil and Water Loans; and
  2. Guaranteed loans by FSA and made by an approved lender, including Farm Ownership Loans, Farm Operating Loans, and Conservation Loans.
- Both delinquent and current loans are eligible. Debts associated with these types of loans that have been referred for offset or collection are also eligible.

#### Question 5: Are all USDA direct and guaranteed loans and debts eligible?

- No. Rural Development loans, FSA Marketing Assistance Loans and debts associated with other USDA programs or other non-USDA federal debts are not eligible.

#### Question 6: Is my farm-related loan from a Farm Credit institution or a local bank eligible?

- No. Loans from commercial lenders such as banks, credit unions or Farm Credit institutions that do not include a FSA guarantee are not eligible.

#### Question 7: Are my FSA Direct, Guaranteed, or Farm Storage Facility Loans obtained after January 1, 2021, eligible?

- No. Only loans made and advanced as of January 1, 2021 are eligible.

### Debt Payments

#### Question 8: Do I need to apply or take any action to receive a debt payment?

- No action on your part is needed right now. If you're uncertain of your demographic designation on file at FSA, you may call [your local service center](#) to verify your classification on record. If an update or correction is needed, you may either fill out an AD-2047 form or contact your local service center to update your record, including race and ethnicity.

#### Question 9: What is the amount of the debt payment I will receive?

- Congress authorized up to 120% of the amount of indebtedness of eligible loans. The amount is based on what is owed as of January 1, 2021. Loan payments received from borrowers after January 1, 2021 will not reduce the amount of the American Rescue Plan debt payment from FSA. Details of the process and your debt payment will be reviewed with you prior to final processing.

#### Question 10: What if I have multiple loans?

- For eligible borrowers, the up to 120% amount is tied to the borrower's total indebtedness across all eligible loans.

#### Question 11: When will debt payments be made?

- FSA is currently compiling and analyzing balances for all types of loans and is determining the quickest and most efficient way to make payments. Once the payment process has been finalized, all direct and guaranteed borrowers will receive a written notification from FSA explaining the payment process. You are also encouraged to check our website regularly at [farmers.gov/AmericanRescuePlan](https://farmers.gov/AmericanRescuePlan) for updates.

### Other Questions

#### Question 12: Is there a fee charged by USDA to participate and do I need a third party to help me access this loan assistance?

- There is no fee to participate. FSA employees will assist borrowers with their questions free of charge and will help producers complete any required documents. You

do not need a third party to access this assistance and can work directly with USDA. USDA plans to collaborate with community-based organizations and universities on outreach, technical assistance, and providing borrowers with access to financial, legal, and tax planning services using the resources provided in Section 1006 of ARP. USDA will compensate these official partners, but borrowers should NOT pay a fee. If you are approached by someone seeking a payment or if it seems like a scam, please share this information with USDA to investigate.

#### Question 13: I'm a socially disadvantaged producer with loans that qualify but I have not designated my race or ethnicity to my local office, what should I do?

- You have several options, which right now all include the USDA Form AD-2047:
  - Call your [local USDA service center](#) and inform them that you'd like to fill out the form over the phone.
  - Download and print form [AD-2047](#), sign it and mail or deliver it to your local USDA Service Center.

#### Question 14: Are there any similar programs for borrowers who are not socially disadvantaged based on race and ethnicity?

- This American Rescue Plan program is for socially disadvantaged borrowers, as outlined in Question 1. FSA offers a range of other support programs available, including assistance provided in response to the pandemic, Disaster Set-Aside and Primary Loan Servicing. If you are facing an economic hardship, we encourage you to contact your [local USDA service center](#).

#### Question 15: I have loan payments that are coming due. What should I do?

- For FSA Direct Loans, borrowers should make all regularly scheduled payments or apply for a COVID-related Disaster Set-Aside of payments.
- For Farm Storage Facility Loans, borrowers should make all regularly scheduled payments.
- For FSA Guaranteed Loans, borrowers should make all regularly scheduled payments as agreed to with your lender.

• Your debt relief payment will be calculated based on the amount you owed on January 1, 2021. USDA is encouraging lenders to be flexible and has issued guidance, as of January 26, 2021, to help lenders understand available flexibilities.

**Question 16: My loan is delinquent, and I was notified that foreclosure or liquidation proceeding were starting. What do I need**

**to do to prevent foreclosure?**

• FSA has suspended all foreclosure, debt collection and other adverse actions for direct loans during the pandemic and has encouraged lenders with guaranteed loans to follow suit. FSA is in the process of gathering information on all such loans from lenders. If you have a guaranteed loan and a lender has indicated plans to continue with foreclosure or liquidation, contact your [local USDA service center](#) so that FSA is made aware and may intervene.

**Question 17: Will USDA require that I prove my U.S. citizenship?**

• No additional information will be required with regards to U.S. citizenship or immigration status. FSA loans are available to U.S. citizens and certain legal residents according to federal law. This information was verified when the loan was originally made and does not need to be repeated.

For more info please visit: - <https://www.farmers.gov/>

## USDA-NRCS in Mississippi announces EQIP Emergency Disaster Sign-up



This vegetable garden was ruined during the March 2021 winter storm.

By Laura T. Anderson, Public Affairs Officer  
Email: [laura.t.anderson@usda.gov](mailto:laura.t.anderson@usda.gov)

**JACKSON, MS, April 14, 2021** — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has funds available for producers impacted by the recent winter storms in Mississippi. This funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a financial assistance program included in the Farm Bill. Applications that are received by **May 7, 2021**, will be considered for funding in this emergency sign-up.

The winter ice and snowstorms in March of 2021 caused significant damage to many seasonal high tunnels in Mississippi. All counties in Mississippi are eligible to participate in this program.

The only conservation practice eligible in the EQIP Emergency Disaster Sign-up is the seasonal high tunnel.

All applicants will need to meet all EQIP eligibility requirements. With this emergency assistance, NRCS will target early fall practice implementation. Landowners must implement the scheduled practice according to NRCS standards and specifications in a timely manner due to emergency circumstances.

“NRCS is dedicated to assisting landowners during hardship,” said Kurt Readus, State Conservationist. “This funding will help Mississippians to replace the seasonal high tunnels damaged by the March winter storms.”

Applications for all NRCS financial assistance programs are accepted on a continuous sign-up process. However, specific sign-up deadlines are established to rank, contract, and fund qualified tracts of land. Applications for the Emergency Disaster Initiative received by **May 7, 2021**, will be considered for funding this year.

Interested producers can apply at their local USDA Service Center by submitting a [Conservation Program Application \(NRCS-CPA-1200\)](#).

NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. More information on NRCS conservation programs can be found at <https://www.farmers.gov/> or <https://www.ms.usda.gov/> under the financial assistance tab.

**COVID-19 Guidance:** NRCS is under Covid-19 limitations. NRCS employees are limited in the amount of direct contact we can have with customers both for your safety and ours. This does not mean field offices will not assist you. It only means that you may need to be more persistent and always contact the office by phone or by email before making an office visit. We've provided a link to our online field office locator: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov>. By using this locator tool, applicants can find contact information for your local field office. Covid-19 is new for all of us, but we have found a way to operate and assist producers in an effort to treat environmental concerns.