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# ADVANCER E-LETTER NEWS

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News Information Needing Your Immediate Attention



DECEMBER 17, 2025

ARKANSAS LAND AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
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# **USDA Announces January 15 National Batching Deadline for Major NRCS Conservation Programs**

NRCS announced the establishment of a national **January 15, 2026**, batching deadline for the first funding round of key conservation programs (EQIP, CSP, ACEP, AMA and the new Regenerative Pilot Program).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the establishment of a national January 15, 2026, batching deadline for the first funding round of key conservation programs. This national batching date ensures producers have a clear, consistent timeline for participating in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA). This includes NRCS' new Regenerative Pilot Program, which provides targeted Farmer First assistance through EQIP and CSP.

"The NRCS team continues its commitment to America's producers advancing conservation, strengthening service delivery, and keeping our promise to the men and women who feed and fuel our nation," said NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt. "Our mission is clear: empower farmers, protect our natural resources, and deliver on President Trump's 'Farmers First' vision."

NRCS programs are continuous sign-up programs, but due to the government shutdown, the agency is implementing an initial national batching period to ensure producers have access to funding and support.

## **Updated NRCS Program Timelines**

- All NRCS conservation programs remain continuous sign-up.
- Farmers and ranchers have until January 15, 2026, to apply for the first batching period.
- National and State Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) will follow later in the year.
- PL-566 and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) opportunities remain open for sponsors based on available funding.

## **Programs with a January 15, 2026, batching period deadline include:**

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)
- New NRCS Regenerative Pilot Program (EQIP & CSP)

For more information, please visit [nrcs.usda.gov](https://nrcs.usda.gov) or contact your local USDA Service Center.

# USDA Farm Loan Program Changes Now in Effect

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) updates to the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Farm Loan Programs are officially in effect. These changes, part of the Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans rule, are designed to increase financial flexibility for agricultural producers, allowing them to grow their operations, boost profitability, and build long-term savings.

These program updates reflect USDA's ongoing commitment to supporting the financial success and resilience of farmers and ranchers nationwide, offering critical tools to help borrowers manage their finances more effectively.

## **What the new rules mean for you:**

**Low-interest installment set-aside program:** Financially distressed borrowers can now defer up to one annual loan payment at a reduced interest rate. This simplified option helps ease financial pressure while keeping farming operations running smoothly.

**Flexible repayment terms:** New repayment options give borrowers the ability to increase their cash flow and build working capital reserves, allowing for long-term financial planning that includes saving for retirement, education, and other future needs.

**Reduced collateral requirements:** FSA has lowered the amount of additional loan security needed for direct farm loans, making it easier for borrowers to leverage their existing equity without putting their personal residence at risk.

These new rules provide more financial freedom for borrowers. By giving farmers and ranchers better tools to manage their operations, we're helping them build long-term financial stability. It's all about making sure they can keep their land, grow their business, and invest in the future.

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## **Trump Administration Announces \$12 Billion Farmer Bridge Payments for American Farmers Impacted by Unfair Market Disruptions**

President Donald J. Trump alongside U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman John Boozman (AR), Senator Deb Fischer (NE), Senator John Hoeven (ND), Representative Austin Scott (GA), and farmers from Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make \$12 billion available in one time bridge payments to American farmers in response to temporary trade market disruptions and increased production costs that are still impacting farmers following four years of disastrous Biden Administration policies that resulted in record high input prices and zero new trade deals. These bridge payments are intended in part to aid farmers until historic investments from the

One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), including reference prices which are set to increase between 10-21% for major covered commodities such as soybeans, corn, and wheat and will reach eligible farmers on October 1, 2026.

Of the \$12 billion provided, up to \$11 billion will be used for the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program, which provides broad relief to United States row crop farmers who produce Barley, Chickpeas, Corn, Cotton, Lentils, Oats, Peanuts, Peas, Rice, Sorghum, Soybeans, Wheat, Canola, Crambe, Flax, Mustard, Rapeseed, Safflower, Sesame, and Sunflower. FBA will help address market disruptions, elevated input costs, persistent inflation, and market losses from foreign competitors engaging in unfair trade practices that impede exports. The FBA Program applies simple, proportional support to producers using a uniform formula to cover a portion of modeled losses during the 2025 crop year. This national loss average is based on FSA reported planted acres, Economic Research Service cost of production estimates, World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates yields and prices and economic modeling.

Farmers who qualify for the FBA Program can expect payments to be released by February 28, 2026. **Eligible farmers should ensure their 2025 acreage reporting is factual and accurate by 5pm ET on December 19, 2025.** Commodity-specific payment rates will be released by the end of the month. Crop insurance linkage will not be required for the FBA Program; however, USDA strongly urges producers to take advantage of the new OBBBA risk management tools to best protect against price risk and volatility in the future.

The remaining \$1 billion of the \$12 billion in bridge payments will be reserved for commodities not covered in the FBA Program such as specialty crops and sugar, for example, though details including timelines for those payments are still under development and require additional understanding of market impacts and economic needs.

The \$12 billion in farmer bridge payments, including those provided through the FBA Program, are authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act and will be administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

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## FSA Signature Policy

Using the correct signature when doing business with FSA can save time and prevent a delay in program benefits.

**The following are FSA signature guidelines:**

**Married individuals must sign their given name.**

Example Mary Doe and John Doe are married. When signing FSA forms, each must use their given name, and may not sign with the name of their spouse. Mrs. Mary Doe may not sign documents as Mrs. John Doe. For Farm Loan Purposes, spouses may not sign on behalf of the other as an authorized signatory, a signature will be needed for each. For a minor, FSA requires the minor's signature and one from the minor's parent. There are certain exceptions where a minor's signature may be accepted without obtaining the signature of one of the parents. Despite

minority status, a youth executing a promissory note for a Youth Loan will incur full personal liability for the debt and will sign individually.

Note: By signing a document with a minor, the parent is liable for actions of the minor and may be liable for refunds, liquidated damages, or other penalties, etc.

When signing on one's behalf the signature must agree with the name typed or printed on the form or be a variation that does not cause the name and signature to be in disagreement. Example - John W. Smith is on the form. The signature may be John W. Smith or J.W. Smith or J. Smith. Or Mary J. Smith may be signed as Mrs. Mary Joe Smith, M.J. Smith, Mary Smith, etc.

**FAXED signatures** will be accepted for certain forms and other documents provided the acceptable program forms are approved for FAXED signatures. Producers are responsible for the successful transmission and receipt of FAXED information.

**Examples of documents not approved for FAXED signatures include:**

- Promissory note
- Assignment of payment
- Joint payment authorization
- Acknowledgement of commodity certificate purchase

Spouses may sign documents on behalf of each other for FSA and CCC programs in which either spouse has an interest, unless written notification denying a spouse this authority has been provided to the county office.

Spouses cannot sign on behalf of each other as an authorized signatory for partnerships, joint ventures, corporations or other similar entities. Likewise, a spouse cannot sign a document on behalf of the other in order to affirm the eligibility of oneself.

Any member of a general partnership can sign on behalf of the general partnership and bind all members unless the Articles of Partnership are more restrictive. Spouses may sign on behalf of each other's individual interest in a partnership, unless notification denying a spouse that authority is provided to the county office. Acceptable signatures for general partnerships, joint ventures, corporations, estates, and trusts must consist of an indicator "by" or "for" the individual's name, individual's name and capacity, or individual's name, capacity, and name of entity.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

**ARKANSAS LAND AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**