



United States Department of Agriculture



## Alabama USDA May Newsletter

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Farm Service Agency](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [Risk Management Agency](#)**ALABAMA Updates - May 2025****In This Issue:**

- [USDA to Issue \\$1.3 Billion to Specialty Crop Producers Through Second Marketing Assistance Program Payment](#)
- [USDA to Open General and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment for 2025](#)
- [Nursery Value Select Improves Insurance Options for Nursery Growers](#)
- [Celebrating 25 Years of USDA's Farm Storage Facility Loan Program](#)
- [Gear Up for the 2025 Hurricane Season](#)
- [USDA Improves Insurance Option for Nursery Growers](#)
- [Preauthorized Debit Available for Farm Loan Borrowers](#)

## USDA to Issue \$1.3 Billion to Specialty Crop Producers Through Second Marketing Assistance Program Payment



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced a second round of payments coming this week for specialty crop producers through the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program, providing up to \$1.3 billion in additional program assistance. U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) already delivered just under \$900 million in first round payments to eligible producers.

**About MASC**

First announced in December 2024, MASC authorized \$2 billion in Commodity Credit Corporation funds to assist specialty crop growers with rising input costs and aid in

the expansion of domestic markets. In January 2025, in response to stakeholder feedback and program demand, funding for MASC was increased to \$2.65 billion. The MASC application period closed on Jan. 10, 2025.

[MASC](#) is designed to help specialty crop producers meet higher marketing costs related to:

- perishability of specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, floriculture, nursery crops and herbs;
- specialized handling and transport equipment with temperature and humidity control;
- packaging to prevent damage;
- moving perishables to market quickly; and
- higher labor costs.

MASC covers the following commercially marketed specialty crops:

- fruits (fresh, dried);
- vegetables (including dry edible beans and peas, mushrooms, and vegetable seed);
- tree nuts;
- and other specialty crops.

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## USDA to Open General and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment for 2025

USDA today announced several Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment opportunities for agricultural producers and landowners. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting offers for both the General and Continuous CRP today through June 6, 2025.

CRP, USDA's flagship conservation program, celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. For four decades, CRP has provided financial and technical support to agricultural producers and landowners who place unproductive or marginal cropland under contract for 10-15 years and who agree to voluntarily convert the land to beneficial vegetative cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and support wildlife habitat. The *American Relief Act, 2025*, extended provisions for CRP through Sept. 30, 2025.

### General CRP (Signup 64)

Agricultural producers and landowners submit offers for General CRP through a competitive bid process. Offers are ranked and scored, by FSA, using nationally established environmental benefits criteria. USDA will announce accepted offers once

ranking and scoring for all offers is completed. In addition to annual rental payments, approved General CRP participants may also be eligible for cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative cover.

### **Continuous CRP (Signup 63)**

Unlike General CRP, Continuous CRP offers are not subject to a competitive bid process. To ensure enrolled acres do not exceed the current statutory cap of 27 million acres, FSA is accepting Continuous CRP offers on a first-come, first-served basis through June 6. However, should allotted CRP acreage remain available following the June 6 deadline, FSA will accept continuous CRP offers from interested landowners through July 31, 2025, and may be subsequently considered for acceptance, in batches, if it's determined that the offered acres support USDA's conservation priorities.

Continuous CRP participants voluntarily offer environmentally sensitive lands, typically smaller parcels than offered through General CRP including wetlands, riparian buffers, and varying wildlife habitats. In return, they receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving vegetative cover.

Continuous CRP enrollment options:

- ***State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Initiative***: Restores vital habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife conservation goals.
- ***Highly Erodible Land Initiative***: Producers and landowners can enroll in CRP to establish long-term cover on highly erodible cropland that has a weighted erodibility index greater than or equal to 20.
- ***Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative***: Prioritizes water quality practices on the land that, if enrolled, will help reduce sediment loadings, nutrient loadings, and harmful algal blooms. The vegetative covers also contribute to increased wildlife populations.
- ***CLEAR30 (a component of the CLEAR Initiative)***: Offers additional incentives for water quality practice adoption and can be accessed in 30-year contracts.
- ***Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program***: Addresses high priority conservation objectives of states and Tribal governments on agricultural lands in specific geographic areas.

### **Grassland and Expiring CRP Acres**

FSA will announce dates for Grassland CRP signup in the near future.

Additionally, landowners with acres enrolled in CRP set to expire Sept. 30, 2025, can offer acres for re-enrollment beginning today. A producer can offer to enroll new acres into CRP and also offer to re-enroll any acres expiring Sept. 30, 2025.

For more information on CRP participant and land eligibility, approved conservation

practices and detailed program fact sheets, visit FSA's [CRP webpage](#).

### More Information

Interested producers should apply through the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. Originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production, the program has evolved over the years, providing many conservation and economic benefits.

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## Nursery Value Select Improves Insurance Options for Nursery Growers

The USDA Risk Management Agency's (RMA) [Nursery Value Select](#) (NVS) is a pilot program that allows nursery producers to select the dollar amount of coverage that best fits their risk management needs. NVS is available in all states and counties.

Beginning with the 2026 crop year, NVS will replace the Nursery Field Grown and Container (FG&C) crop insurance program. Nursery FG&C will no longer be available for producers to purchase after the 2025 crop year.

NVS will offer comparable but improved risk management options for those who currently have coverage with the Nursery FG&C program. Like Nursery FG&C, NVS also covers field grown and containerized nursery plants and offers coverage levels between catastrophic and 75%. Unlike Nursery FG&C, NVS has simplified reporting requirements, and an Occurrence Loss Option is available.

The sales closing date for the 2026 crop year is May 1, 2025, or Sept. 1, 2025, depending on location. Producers should contact a [local crop insurance agent](#) to learn more about NVS and how they can apply for coverage for the 2026 crop year.

Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net on the [RMA website](#) and the [Basics for Beginners](#) webpage. Producers may also contact their [RMA Regional Office](#).

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## Celebrating 25 Years of USDA's Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is celebrating 25 years of the agency's popular Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) this month. For a quarter century, family-owned agricultural operations have received low-interest financing through the

program to enhance or expand their operations and manage marketing of the commodities they produce by building or upgrading permanent and portable storage facilities and purchasing needed handling equipment.

“Participating in FSA’s Farm Storage Facility Loans program provides producers affordable financing that allows them to build an on-farm storage system the right way from day one — a system that provides grain handling capacity for years to come,” said FSA Administrator Bill Beam. “Many people think of grain storage when they hear on-farm commodity storage, but the reality is, the program has expanded over the past quarter century to include a variety of storage and handling options including bins, cold storage, trucks and more, all designed to help agricultural producers take their commodities from field to facility to the end user.”

The FSFL program was created in May 2000 to address existing on-farm grain storage needs. Since the program’s inception, more than 40,000 loans have been issued for on-farm storage, increasing storage capacity by one billion bushels. While many producers primarily associate the program with grain storage, over the past 25 years the eligible storage has expanded to include a wide variety of facilities and related equipment - new or used and permanent or portable - including hay barns, bulk tanks, and facilities for cold storage. Drying, handling and storage equipment is also eligible, including skid steers and storage and handling trucks.

### **Eligibility**

Eligible commodities for storage loans include grains, oilseeds, peanuts, pulse crops, hay, hemp, honey, renewable biomass commodities, fruits and vegetables, floriculture, hops, seed cotton, wool, maple sap, maple syrup, milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, eggs, unprocessed meat and poultry, rye and aquaculture. Most recently, controlled atmosphere storage was added as an eligible facility and [bison meat](#) has been also added to the list of eligible commodities.

FSFL is an excellent financing program to address on-farm storage and handling needs for small and mid-sized farms, and for new farmers. Loan terms vary from three to 12 years. The maximum loan amount for storage facilities is \$500,000. The maximum loan amount for storage and handling trucks is \$100,000. In 2016, FSA introduced a new storage loan category, the microloan, for loans with an aggregate balance up to \$50,000. Microloans offer a 5% downpayment requirement, compared to a 15% downpayment for a regular FSFL, and microloans waive the regular three-year production history requirement.

### **How to apply**

Loan applications should be filed in the administrative FSA county office that maintains a producer’s farm records. Producers can contact their [FSA County Office](#) to make an appointment. Beginning farmers who haven’t worked with FSA can visit [farmers.gov/your-business/beginning-farmers](https://farmers.gov/your-business/beginning-farmers) for more information or view the [New Farmers Fact Sheet](#).

### **More information**



For more information, visit the [FSFL webpage](#), view the [fact sheet](#) and our [Ask the Expert Blog](#), or contact your [FSA County Office](#).

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## Gear Up for the 2025 Hurricane Season

Hurricane season is here, beginning June 1 and running through Nov. 30. Farmers, ranchers and forest landowners have been significantly impacted by hurricanes in recent years. USDA encourages agricultural producers to prepare for the 2025 season and get familiar with recovery resources.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA), [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS), and [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) offer a suite of disaster assistance programs to help you recover from the impacts of natural disasters.

[Get Prepared](#)

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## USDA Improves Insurance Option for Nursery Growers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to improve crop insurance tailored for nursery producers. The Risk Management Agency's (RMA) Nursery Value Select (NVS) program enables nursery producers to select the dollar amount of coverage that best fits their risk management needs.

Beginning with the 2026 crop year, NVS will offer a new Peak Endorsement Pilot, which allows producers to increase coverage during a designated peak period when the inventory value may be higher than the selected value. This Peak Endorsement Pilot is designed to provide producers with NVS the same coverage that the Nursery Peak Inventory Endorsement offered under the Nursery Field Grown and Container (FG&C) program.

NVS provides similar but improved coverage to the longstanding Nursery FG&C program. RMA administered the Nursery FG&C crop insurance program for nearly 30 years. However, the Nursery FG&C program relies on a partnership between RMA and a private contractor to update and maintain the Eligible Plant List and Plant Price Schedule (EPLPPS) and associated software packages. The private contractor permanently ceased operations shortly after providing all necessary contractual obligations for the 2025 crop year. Without access to the EPLPPS and associated software, **the Nursery FG&C crop insurance program will no longer be available to nursery producers beginning with the 2026 crop year.**

NVS will offer comparable but improved risk management options for those who currently have coverage with the Nursery FG&C program. Like Nursery FG&C, NVS

currently have coverage with the Nursery FG&C program. Like Nursery FG&C, NVS also covers field grown and containerized nursery plants and offers coverage levels between catastrophic and 75%. Unlike Nursery FG&C, NVS has simplified reporting requirements, and an Occurrence Loss Option is available.

The sales closing date for the 2026 crop year is May 1, 2025, or Sept. 1, 2025, depending on location.

NVS was first available in the 2021 crop year, and producers insured more than \$1 billion in liabilities in crop year 2025.

To learn more about NVS and any required transitions, visit the [NVS website](#), watch a [video](#), or read through our [frequently asked questions](#).

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#). Producers can learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov) or by contacting their [RMA Regional Office](#).

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## Preauthorized Debit Available for Farm Loan Borrowers

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has implemented pre-authorized debit (PAD) for Farm Loan Program (FLP) borrowers. PAD is a voluntary and alternative method for making weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual payments on loans.

PAD payments are pre-authorized transactions that allow the National Financial and Accounting Operations Center (NFAOC) to electronically collect loan payments from a customer's account at a financial institution.

PAD may be useful if you use nonfarm income from regular wages or salary to make payments on loans or adjustment offers or for payments from seasonal produce stands. PAD can only be established for future payments.

To request PAD, customers, along with their financial institution, must fill out form RD 3550-28. This form has no expiration date, but a separate form RD 3550-28 must be completed for each loan to which payments are to be applied. A fillable form can be accessed on the USDA Rural Development (RD) website at [rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines](http://rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines). Click forms and search for "Form 3550-28."

If you have a "filter" on the account at your financial institution, you will need to provide the financial institution with the following information: Origination ID: 1220040804, Agency Name: USDA RD DCFO.

PAD is offered by FSA at no cost. Check with your financial institution to discuss any



potential cost. Preauthorized debit has no expiration date, but you can cancel at any time by submitting a written request to your local FSA office. If a preauthorized debit agreement receives three payment rejections within a three-month period, the preauthorized debit agreement will be cancelled by FSA. The payment amount and due date of your loan is not affected by a cancellation of preauthorized debit. You are responsible to ensure your full payment is made by the due date.

For more information about PAD, contact your County USDA Service Center [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

[Top of page](#)

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