

FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATION FOR SPECIALTY CROPS



Overview

The Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) Program provides assistance to specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety program expenses in 2022 and 2023.

These operations incur significant costs to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements each year with little opportunity to recover increased costs.

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for FSCSC applicants must meet the following:

- Be a specialty crop operation;
- Have obtained or renewed a:
 - 2022 food safety certification that was issued between June 21, 2022 and December 31, 2022; or
 - 2023 food safety certification issued during calendar year 2023; and
 - Have paid eligible expenses;
- Meet the definition of a small business or very small business; and
- Be located in the United States, District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

| PROGRAM YEAR | ELIGIBLE CERTIFICATION DATE | APPLICATION DEADLINE |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2022 | June 21, 2022 - December 31, 2022 | January 31, 2023 |
| 2023 | January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023 | January 31, 2024 |

What Expenses are Eligible?

Specialty crop operations may receive reimbursement for developing an initial food safety plan, maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan, food safety certification, certification upload fees, microbiological testing, and training.

Specialty crop operations who obtain their food safety certification through a group model under a food safety management system are eligible for their share of eligible expenses paid by the group, in addition to any eligible expense incurred individually.

What Expenses are not Eligible?

Ineligible expenses include infrastructure improvements, equipment, supplies, salaries and benefits of employees, and fees or penalties for late payment.

What are the Maximum Payment Rates?

| CATEGORY OF ELIGIBLE EXPENSES | PAYMENT AMOUNT OF ELIGIBLE COSTS | |
|--|--|--|
| | HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMER OR RANCHER | ALL OTHER APPLICANTS |
| Development of a food safety plan for first-time certification | 75 percent (no maximum) | 50 percent (no maximum) |
| Maintaining or updating a food safety plan | 75 percent, up to a maximum of \$375 | 50 percent, up to a maximum of \$250 |
| Food safety certification | 75 percent, up to a maximum of \$2,000 | 50 percent, up to a maximum of \$2,000 |
| Certification upload fees | 75 percent, up to a maximum of \$375 | 50 percent, up to a maximum of \$250 |
| Microbiological testing – products | 75 percent, up to 5 tests | 50 percent, up to 5 tests |
| Microbiological testing – soil amendments | 75 percent, up to 5 tests | 50 percent, up to 5 tests |
| Microbiological testing – water | 75 percent, up to 5 tests | 50 percent, up to 5 tests |
| Training | 100 percent, up to a maximum of \$300 | 100 percent, up to a maximum of \$200 |

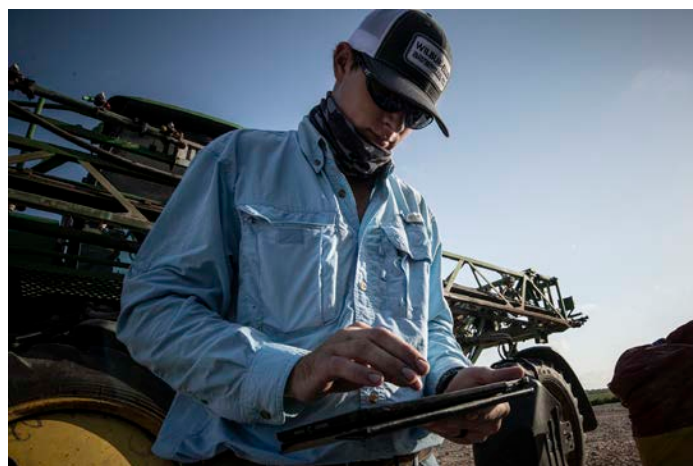
How to Apply

Eligible specialty crop operations may apply for FSCSC by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops application, and submitting it to any FSA county office. A complete application includes all the following, which may be downloaded at farmers.gov/food-safety:

- FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) Application
- AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet, for new customers or existing customers who need to update their customer profile
- CCC-860, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification (if applicable)
- If requested by FSA, the applicant must provide supporting documentation to substantiate the expenses. Examples of supporting documentation include paid invoices, purchase receipts, test results, food safety plans, training documentation, and other records determined acceptable by COC.

Where to Apply

You may apply at one of over 2,100 FSA offices nationwide. Applications may also be submitted by mail, fax, email, hand delivery or by electronic means. Please contact the FSA county office prior to sending applications electronically for instructions and assistance. The FSCSC application and associated forms are available online at farmers.gov/food-safety.



Who to Call for Help

Producers interested in one-on-one support with the FSCSC program application can contact our call center at 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance.

More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. For more information about FSCSC, visit farmers.gov/food-safety or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.