

Overview of USDA Program Flexibilities for Hurricane Helene

USDA's Farm Production and Conservation agencies - Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) are ready to assist impacted producers and adding flexibilities to its disaster assistance programs. Flexibilities by program include:

Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Forest Restoration Program

- The [Emergency Conservation Program \(ECP\)](#) provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and to implement emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought.
- [Emergency Forest Restoration Program \(EFRP\)](#) provides funding to restore privately owned forests damaged by natural disasters. Assistance helps landowners carry out emergency measures to restore forest health on land damaged by drought, floods, and other natural disaster events.
- To help expedite assistance, FSA has taken the following measures:
 - Extended ECP and EFRP signup that begins Oct. 15, 2024, and runs through June 1, 2025, in states affected by Hurricane Helene.
 - Executed Emergency Response (ER-850) authorization of emergency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) circumstances to expedite FSA approval of practices involving surface debris removal, fence restoration and non-ground disturbing activities.
 - Waiver of onsite inspection requirement for non-engineering practices for ECP and EFRP.
 - Waiver of requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal to support critical disaster recovery efforts. Producers should contact FSA for any questions on allowable activities.

Livestock Indemnity Program

- The [Livestock Indemnity Program \(LIP\)](#) provides benefits to livestock owners and contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including eligible adverse weather.
- FSA has issued guidance to FSA County Committees and local staff to exercise maximum flexibility in determining acceptable loss documentation and to ensure LIP applications are acted on timely.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish

- The [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#) provides assistance to owners of livestock, and producers of honeybees and farm-raised fish for feed and death losses due to an eligible natural disaster event.
- FSA is providing assistance to help cover above normal costs to transport livestock to feed and/or transport feed/forage to livestock in hurricane-impacted states, and assistance to help cover above normal costs to haul water to livestock in hurricane-impacted states.

Tree Assistance Program

- The [Tree Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) provides financial cost-share assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or, where applicable, rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost by natural disasters.
- FSA has extended assistance to trees, bushes and vines that have not died but are no longer capable of production (not economically viable)

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program

- The [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program \(NAP\)](#) provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevents crop planting.
- Under NAP, FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirement on hand harvested crops, extended deadline to file a Notice of Loss provided flexibility for FSA staff to perform loss adjustment activities and/or waive field inspections in cases where the cause of loss can be verified through other means.

Marketing Assistance Loans

- For producers with [Marketing Assistance Loans \(MAL\)](#), FSA is providing additional delivery time for farm-stored commodities delivered to the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and providing additional time for producers to deliver MAL commodity to a buyer to repay MAL with sales proceeds.
- FSA is also postponing MAL foreclosure letters applicable to losses or damages due to hurricanes for up to 90 calendar days.

Crop Insurance

- If you have [Federal crop insurance](#), contact your crop insurance agent as soon as crop or livestock losses are apparent. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) has authorized crop insurance companies to provide [flexibility on reporting requirements](#) for those who are unable to report losses due to the disaster.