Federal Disaster Assistance for Agriculture

A number of federal assistance programs are designed to address agricultural losses following a natural disaster, including insurance, direct payments for loss, loans, and cost share to rehabilitate damaged lands. These programs are intended to assist producers recovering from production, financial, and physical loss related to or caused by the disaster. They are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through three agencies: the Risk Management Agency (RMA), the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). All programs have permanent authorization, and only one (the emergency loan program) requires a federal disaster designation. Many of the programs receive mandatory funding amounts that are “such sums as necessary” and are not subject to annual discretionary appropriations. Other programs, however, require supplemental appropriations. Some programs are subject to payment limits, while others are not (e.g., crop insurance).

Table 1 provides a brief overview of permanent USDA assistance programs for agricultural producers following a natural disaster. It is not comprehensive as it does not include temporary assistance programs, such as the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP). Other programs for community water, housing, food assistance, and wildfire support offered by USDA are also not discussed.

For more detailed information on USDA disaster assistance programs, see CRS Report RS21212, Agricultural Disaster Assistance, and CRS Report R42854, Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation. For additional information on WHIP, see CRS In Focus IF11539, Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP).

Types of Losses
Natural disasters create a number of different types of losses for agricultural operations.

- Production loss—the loss of crops, animals, or trees, prevented planting of a future crop due to lack of access (flooding), or the loss of forage for livestock.
- Physical loss—the loss of related production infrastructure such as terraces, irrigation systems, barns, and waste management structures.
- Financial loss—the loss of income and revenue.

Types of Disasters
Most all USDA disaster assistance programs are in response to natural disasters. This includes, but is not limited to, blizzard, fire, hurricane, flood, tornado, drought, hail, volcanic eruption, freeze, and earthquake. In some cases, insect infestation and disease may qualify as a natural disaster under some programs. Mannmade disaster conditions are generally excluded.

Types of Support
USDA offers assistance through a number of different mechanisms.

- Insurance—subsidized premiums for yield or revenue loss insurance coverage.
- Direct payments—generally made to cover production loss in excess of normal loss.
- Loans—low interest loans when commercial credit is unavailable.
- Cost-share—a percentage of the cost to reinstall conservation infrastructure or rehabilitate damaged land.

Additional CRS Resources
Additional CRS products are available related to nonagricultural federal disaster assistance.

- General disaster response—CRS Report R41981, Congressional Primer on Responding to and Recovering from Major Disasters and Emergencies
- Response and Recovery Programs—CRS Report RL31734, Federal Disaster Assistance Response and Recovery Programs: Brief Summaries.
- Disaster declarations—CRS Report R43784, FEMA’s Disaster Declaration Process: A Primer.

CRS expert lists are also available by event.

- Natural disaster and hazards generally—CRS Report R43519, Natural Disasters and Hazards: CRS Experts.
### Table 1. USDA’s Agricultural Disaster Assistance Programs

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program and Agency</th>
<th>Disaster</th>
<th>Coverage and Requirements</th>
<th>Payment Trigger</th>
<th>Timing and Funding</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Crop insurance</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>More than 100 crops are eligible; also covered are livestock margins and pasture. Producer must purchase a subsidized policy prior to planting.</td>
<td>Yield or revenue loss greater than the deductible (e.g., 30%) specified in the policy.</td>
<td>Indemnity payment issued after claim is filed, adjusted, and processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)</strong></td>
<td>All (fire must be related to an eligible disaster)</td>
<td>Available for crops not currently eligible for crop insurance. Producer pays fee prior to planting.</td>
<td>Crop loss in excess of 50% or for prevented planting 35% of intended acres; additional coverage available.</td>
<td>Payment issued after claim is filed and processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)</strong></td>
<td>All except drought (unless associated with anthrax)</td>
<td>Beef and dairy cattle, hogs, chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, sheep, goats, alpacas, deer, elk, emus, llamas, reindeer, and equine; no fee.</td>
<td>Livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality or sold at reduced sale price caused by adverse weather and disease.</td>
<td>Payment issued after application is processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)</strong></td>
<td>Drought or fire (federal land only)</td>
<td>Drought-affected pastureland and cropland planted for grazing; rangeland managed by a federal agency due to a qualifying fire; no fee</td>
<td>Drought intensity level for an individual county, as published in the U.S. Drought Monitor.</td>
<td>Payment issued after application is processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)</strong></td>
<td>All (including disease)</td>
<td>Livestock, honey bees, and farm-raised fish; losses may be caused by disease, adverse weather, feed or water shortages, or wildfires; no fee.</td>
<td>Bee losses in excess of normal mortality; certain losses for livestock, including feed and water costs.</td>
<td>Payment issued after application is processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tree Assistance Program (TAP)</strong></td>
<td>All (including disease and infestation)</td>
<td>Trees, bushes, and vines from which an annual crop is produced; no fee.</td>
<td>Tree/bush/vine mortality loss or damage in excess of 15% mortality.</td>
<td>Payment issued after application is processed; unlimited program funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency (EM) disaster loans</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Damage to crops, livestock, equipment or farmland when commercial credit not available.</td>
<td>Disaster declaration by President, Secretary, or FSA; 30% crop loss or a physical loss.</td>
<td>Loan application due within eight months of disaster; funding subject to appropriations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disaster Set-Aside (DSA)</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>One full year’s loan payment can be moved to end of loan period.</td>
<td>Disaster declaration by President, Secretary, or FSA.</td>
<td>Upon declaration of disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Damaged private farmland or emergency water conservation during drought. Federal and state land is ineligible.</td>
<td>Determined by FSA county committee or national FSA office in case of drought.</td>
<td>Payment issued after work is completed; funding subject to appropriations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Damaged nonindustrial private forestland. Federal and state land is ineligible.</td>
<td>Determined by FSA county committee.</td>
<td>Payment issued after work is completed; funding subject to appropriations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)</strong></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Runoff and erosion measures on private, state, tribal, and federal lands (U.S. Forest Service land only). Must have project sponsor (local/state government).</td>
<td>Determined by NRCS state office.</td>
<td>Funding released after signed cooperative agreement with project sponsor; funding subject to appropriations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled by CRS.

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