

FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAM INITIATIVES FOR UNDERSERVED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) has historically excluded African Americans, Native Americans and other vital communities. Too often, farmers and ranchers in these communities do not even know about the Farm Bill programs that can help them implement and pay for projects beneficial to the overall management of their lands and the conservation of our nation's wildlife, habitat and other natural resources. To address this inequity, the 2018 Farm Bill introduced initiatives to improve access to USDA programs and services for long-excluded producers. This fact sheet summarizes who qualifies and the opportunities the initiatives offer.

Historically Underserved Producers

Historically underserved producers (HUPs) is the collective USDA term for farmers and ranchers eligible for the Farm Bill initiatives in place to address their unique needs and circumstances. It includes the following four categories of producers (see table below).



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Farm Bill HUP Initiatives

Qualified producers are encouraged to inquire about and apply for the Farm Bill initiatives described below that offer financial and technical assistance for implementing conservation practices and enhancements on their land.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Advance Payment Option: Limits the out-of-pocket costs for HUPs to start implementing conservation practices such as amending soil properties, improving or creating wildlife habitat and restoring wetlands. Farmers may elect to receive an advance of at least 50% of the EQIP payment amount to offset their costs prior to the actual implementation of each practice rather than reimbursement after implementation.

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED PRODUCER CATEGORIES

Socially Disadvantaged	Beginning	Limited Resource	Veteran
A group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice without regard to their individual qualities because of their identity as Black, Native American, Alaskan Native, Hispanic and Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.	A person who has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years and will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch, i.e., provide significant day-to-day labor and management.	A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four or less than 50% of county median household income in each of the previous two years.	A person who served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Coast Guard, including the reserves, and was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable and has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program

(FOTO): Encourages and assists HUPs in the ownership and operation of farms and ranches through education and training and promotion of equitable participation in all USDA agricultural programs. Available annual funding is split equally between The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and The Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (Section 2501 Program—competitive grant programs that fund education, training and technical assistance for beginning farmers.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)’s Transition

Incentives Program (TIP): Provides landowners or operators with two additional annual rental payments on land enrolled in expiring CRP contracts on the condition they sell or rent this land to a beginning farmer or rancher or to a socially disadvantaged group.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Direct and Guaranteed Loans

Program: Helps family farmers and ranchers obtain loans from USDA-approved commercial lenders at reasonable terms to buy farmland or finance agricultural production. FSA will guarantee farm loans up to \$1,776,000 through a commercial lender.

Emergency Conservation Program: Allows limited resource, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers to receive up to 90% of the cost of rehabilitating farmland damaged by natural disasters.

Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage

(PLC) Programs: Provides an exception to the minimum requirement of 10 base acres for payments to help beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers weather fluctuations in crop revenue or price.

Relending Program to Resolve Ownership and Succession on Farmland: Helps eligible farmers resolve issues on farmland with multiple owners and undivided ownership interests.

Additional Resources

2018 Farm Bill: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2>; <https://www.usda.gov/farmbill>



USDA

2018 Farm Bill Conservation Programs:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/>

Beginning, Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

Highlights: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/agriculture-improvement-act-of-2018-highlights-and-implications/beginning-socially-disadvantaged-and-veteran-farmers-and-ranchers/>

New Farmers: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/>

Veteran Initiatives: <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/veterans>

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher

Fact Sheet: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2019/sda_loans-fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf

Limited Resource Farmer Self Determination

Tool: <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>



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