

# USDA issues first Coronavirus assistance payments

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced Thursday, June 4, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has already approved more than \$545 million in payments to producers who have applied for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. FSA began taking applications May 26, and the agency has received over 86,000 applications for this important relief program.

"The coronavirus has hurt America's farmers, ranchers, and producers, and these payments directed by President Trump will help this critical industry weather the current pandemic so they can continue to plant and harvest a safe, nutritious, and affordable crop for the American people," said Secretary Perdue. "We have tools and resources available to help producers understand the program and enable them to work with Farm Service Agency staff to complete applications as smoothly and efficiently as possible and get payments into the pockets of our patriotic farmers."

In the first six days of the application period, FSA has already made payments to more than 35,000 producers. Out of the gate, the top five states for CFAP payments are Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and South Dakota. USDA has released data on application progress and program payments and will release further updates each Monday at 2 pm ET. The report can be viewed at [farmers.gov/cfap](http://farmers.gov/cfap).

FSA will accept applications through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion in financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-

percent-or-greater price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

In order to do this, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

### Getting Help from FSA

New customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer general assistance. This is a recommended first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from [farmers.gov/cfap](http://farmers.gov/cfap). Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help producers identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments. Producers self-certify their records when applying for CFAP and that documentation is not submitted with the application. However, producers may be asked for their documentation to support the certification of eligible commodities, so producers should retain the information used to complete their application.

Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to

print a pre-filled CFAP application, sign it, and submit it to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery through an office drop box. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred delivery method for your local office. Team members at FSA county offices will be able to answer detailed questions and help producers apply quickly and efficiently through phone and online tools. Find contact information for your local office at [farmers.gov/cfap](http://farmers.gov/cfap).

### Policy Clarifications

FSA has been working with stakeholder groups to provide further clarification to producers on the CFAP program. For example, the agency has published a matrix of common marketing contracts that impact eligibility for non-specialty crops and has provided a table that crosswalks common livestock terms to CFAP cattle categories. Updated information can be found in the frequently asked questions section of the CFAP website.

### More Information

To find the latest information on CFAP, visit [farmers.gov/cfap](http://farmers.gov/cfap) or call 877-508-8364.

USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at [farmers.gov/](http://farmers.gov/)

coronavirus.

### ...Family Fit Day

*(Continued from page 3)*

That's why Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health Educator Milissa Wright, Coke, Concho, Menard and Sterling Counties reminds families that it is so very important to keep your family members healthy during this time which includes all health.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many events maybe virtual or tailored to maintain physical distancing. Some creative ideas include:

- Encouraging family bike rides/hikes on trails that are open
- Host a sidewalk chalk art contest
- Have "Bear hunts" -

encourage people in your community to place a stuffed animal in an easily-visible window of their home so that families can go for a walk and search for them and take photos of the things they find

- Join a healthy cooking class or healthy cooking tips on your social media channels

In addition to promoting programs on June 13, you can get involved in Family Health & Fitness Day by:

- Using the tagline, Parks Build Healthy Communities to promote your health and wellness programs and activities
- Share your Family Health & Fitness Day ideas, virtual events and photos on social media using the hashtag #NRPAFamilyFitDay leading up to and on June 13.

## Miller calls for 10% cut to TDA budget

Following the recent request by Governor Greg Abbott for agencies to cut their budgets by 5 percent, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller has ordered his staff to deepen that cut to 10 percent. Agencies have been requested to submit their budget cut plans by June 15.

"This is going to be a tough year for Texas families," Miller said, "and state government needs to tighten its belt along with everyone else. While TDA is already a lean, efficient agency that pays its own way, I've directed my staff to cut 10% without affecting our farmers and ranchers or our rural communities."

TDA is a cost-recovery agency, meaning that most of its programs are funded by those that use them. Agency responsibilities include regulation of pesticides, ensuring accuracy of scales, protecting agriculture from invasive pests

and plant diseases, ag marketing and more. The agency also manages the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs and is responsible for 5 million school meals every day. Throughout the pandemic, Commissioner Miller and the Texas Department of Agriculture have been on the forefront in the fight to save Texas rural hospitals, ensure schoolchildren continue to receive healthy meals and protect the agriculture industry and the food supply chain.

"While Texas might just be reopening, we will feel the economic impact of this pandemic for a long while," Miller said. "But with patience and prayers, we will make it through this crisis because we are Texans," Miller said. "We've had our share of dust storms, tornadoes, droughts, and famines. And we have always withstood the test. We will again."

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# Please Pray for our Communities, Our County, Our State and Our Country



*And Don't Forget to Pray for Rain!*