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## **USDA to Issue More than \$235 Million to Farmers Hit by Natural Disasters, Including Hurricane Milton**

News Release |  
Washington DC  
|  
October 30, 2024  
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### **Assistance includes \$143 million for crop and forestry losses due to Hurricane Milton, \$92 million to offset grazing losses due to drought and wildfire in 2022**

**WASHINGTON, Oct. 30, 2024** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing payments this week to agricultural producers impacted by natural disasters, including \$143 million in crop insurance indemnities for Florida producers impacted by Hurricane Milton and about \$92 million for livestock producers, nationwide, who faced increased supplemental feed costs as a result of forage losses due to 2022 qualifying drought and wildfire. The payments for Milton-impacted Florida producers are for those who have Federal crop insurance coverage through the Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index (HIP-WI) endorsement and the Tropical Storm (TS) option. These crop insurance payments are part of USDA's broader support to help producers after Hurricane Milton. The payments for livestock producers are through the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) 2022, and are a second round of payments to producers using remaining funds in the program.

"Florida farmers, livestock producers and forest landowners have been hit hard by hurricanes this year, and we're continuing our efforts to help producers recover following hurricanes like Milton," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "We've

used a number of flexibilities following hurricanes Debby and Helene, and we're extending those to producers impacted by Hurricane Milton and future named storms. Additionally, today's payments for America's livestock producers serve as another example of how we're leveraging every available resource to help as many people as possible on the road to recovery."

### **Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index**

Producers with Federal crop insurance coverage through the Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index (HIP-WI) endorsement and the Tropical Storm (TS) option will see payments from their Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) in the next 30 days. Under this insurance option, producers will receive over \$143 million in indemnities for hurricane-related losses from Hurricane Milton. These payments will directly help farmers and rural communities recover.

In total, over \$776 million in payments have been issued under HIP-WI in 2024. With the payments from Milton, Florida producers will have received about \$340 million since HIP-WI became available in 2020.

Producers do not need to file a claim to receive an indemnity payment under HIP-WI. If a county is triggered, the AIP will issue an indemnity payment in the coming weeks. Triggered counties were identified by USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) in [Product Management Bulletin 24-069](#) and will also be available in the county's actuarial documents. Eligible producers will receive a HIP-WI indemnity payment in addition to any applicable indemnity payments due to them through their underlying crop insurance policy.

### **Additional Crop Insurance Support**

Producers with crop insurance coverage beyond HIP-WI will see indemnity payments in the coming weeks. If you have [Federal crop insurance](#), contact your crop insurance agent as soon as crop or livestock losses are apparent.

Due to the catastrophic damage that Hurricane Milton caused as well as the continuing impacts in the southeast from hurricanes Debby and Helene, RMA authorized emergency procedures to help producers with hurricane-related losses. RMA is working with crop insurance companies to streamline and accelerate the adjustment of losses and issuance of indemnity payments to crop insurance

policyholders in impacted areas. RMA's emergency procedure flexibilities apply to all counties in Florida.

## **Disaster Assistance and Flexibilities**

In addition to crop insurance, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offer a wide array of disaster assistance, farm loan and conservation programs. These programs can help producers recover in a number of ways, including land and private forest rehabilitation, fence loss, debris removal, animal mortality disposal and other challenges.

As [previously announced](#) following Hurricane Helene, USDA has added flexibilities to a number of disaster assistance programs to help streamline and expedite the recovery process for producers impacted by recent hurricanes.

FSA is providing flexibilities for its programs, including extended signup opportunities and use of waivers and emergency procedures to expedite program delivery. The flexibilities include an extended signup period for the [Emergency Conservation Program](#) (ECP) and [Emergency Forest Restoration Program](#) (EFRP), which is now open and runs through June 1, 2025.

FSA offers a variety of direct and guaranteed farm loans, including operating and [emergency farm loans](#), to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low-interest emergency loans to help them recover from production and physical losses. Loans can help producers replace essential property, purchase inputs, livestock, equipment, feed and seed, cover family living expenses or refinance farm-related debts and other farm needs. FSA also offers several loan servicing options, including the [Disaster Set-Aside Program](#), for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to producers through its [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. The program can assist with restoring livestock infrastructure, emergency animal mortality disposal, and immediate soil erosion protection. Because of the need to dispose of poultry and livestock quickly, NRCS is offering an early-start

waiver to producers once they file an initial application. Additionally, NRCS offers help to communities through its [Emergency Watershed Protection](#) (EWP) Program that provides assistance to landowners and project sponsors following a natural disaster.

Contact your local FSA county office or your crop insurance agent to report all crop, livestock and farm infrastructure damages and losses. Producers can also contact the FSA call center at 877-508-8364.

Visit [farmers.gov/hurricane](https://farmers.gov/hurricane) for a [full list of available flexibilities](#), [frequently asked questions](#), webinars and other resources.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on [farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov), including the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), [Loan Assistance Tool](#), and [Natural Disasters and Crop Insurance fact sheet](#).

Additionally, FarmRaise offers an [FSA educational hub](#) with Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP) decision tools as well as farm loan resource videos.

## **Emergency Livestock Relief Program**

ELRP support came from the *Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023* (P.L. 117-328), signed by President Biden that provides financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters occurring in calendar year 2022. The about \$92 million in ELRP payments for 2022 losses build on more than \$465 million in payments made to eligible livestock producers in September 2023 who suffered qualifying losses due to drought or wildfire in 2022. Learn more on the [Emergency Relief webpage](#).

## **More Information**

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and

committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://usda.gov).

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