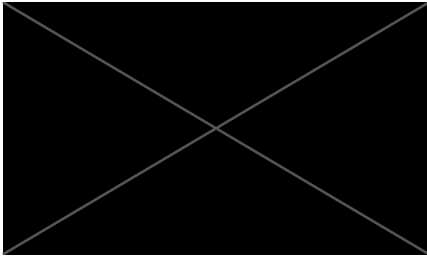


Farm Programs

Mail Stop 0510
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0510

February 15, 2024



Thank you for your letter of September 14, 2023, to the Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas J. Vilsack, regarding the inclusion of honeybees in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). The Secretary asked me to respond on his behalf and I apologize for the delay in responding.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to delivering financial assistance to agricultural producers impacted by eligible loss conditions. While honeybees are not eligible livestock for LIP, they are covered under the Emergency Livestock Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP). Honey is also an insurable crop under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Under USDA, for different programs, honeybees are often not considered livestock, dependent on the statutory program language as established by Congress. Since ELAP covers the loss of honeybee hives and colonies due to an approved natural disaster or other qualifying loss, FSA does not consider honeybees as livestock under the LIP program.

[ELAP](#) provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish that have losses because of disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, including losses due to a federally protected species attack including Grizzly bears. ELAP assistance is for losses not covered by other USDA disaster assistance programs. ELAP payments for honeybee colony losses is based on a minimum of 75 percent of the result of multiplying the number of colonies lost in excess of normal mortality by the fair market value per colony for the applicable program year. Eligible honeybees include bees housed in a managed hive and used for honey production, pollination, or honeybee breeding.

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill) amended certain provisions related to ELAP effective with the 2019 program year. Those amendments include reimbursement of 90 percent of the cost of losses for socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning, or a veteran farmer or rancher.

[NAP](#) provides financial assistance to producers of table and non-table honey produced commercially for human consumption. Honey producers must apply for coverage and pay a service fee by the application closing date, which for honey is December 31 of the prior calendar year. Producers must timely file acreage (colony) reports and production records by reporting pounds of honey produced per colony of bees per crop year.

In addition to disaster assistance programs, FSA also offers Marketing Assistance Loans, Farm Storage Facility Loans and other direct and guaranteed farm loan programs in support of honeybees and honey production. For reference and to assist in your program decision-making efforts, I'm enclosing two resources — [Bee in the Know](#), a guide to USDA assistance for honey producers and an [FSA fact sheet](#) that provides a side-by-side comparison of disaster assistance available from ELAP and NAP.

The Biden-Harris Administration recently revised the NAP regulations such that form [CCC-860 Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification](#) may serve as an application for basic 50/55 NAP coverage. This change makes use of the statutory waiver of the NAP service fee for producers who have certified as a socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning or veteran farmer or rancher.

We will continue to work closely with FSA state and county leadership to identify areas where additional guidance and resources could be utilized to help improve and provide greater program support.

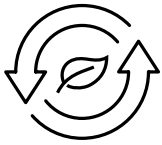
Again, thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,



JOHN J. BERGE

Acting Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs



DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Honey and Honeybee Programs

NAP

NAP Overview

Under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), eligible honey includes table and non-table honey produced commercially for human consumption.

NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields or crop losses or prevents crop planting. To qualify for assistance, covered crop losses must occur as a result of an eligible cause of loss during the coverage period and directly cause, accelerate, or exacerbate destruction or deterioration of the eligible crop as determined by the county committee.

NAP offers basic 50/55 coverage equivalent at 50 percent of a producer's approved yield and 55 percent of the average market price. (Must have greater than 50 percent loss for payment.)

Additionally, buy-up coverage levels are available (except for crops intended for grazing). Coverage is available from 50 percent to 65 percent of the approved yield, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers must have successfully grown the crop in a prior year to be eligible for buy-up Coverage.

Service Fees and Premium Cost

The NAP service fee is \$325 per crop per administrative county. All honey is considered a single crop regardless of type or variety of floral source, intended use, or where the honey is produced. As a result, the administrative service fee of \$325 will be applicable.

Basic 50/55 Coverage is available for the \$325 service fee. Producers who qualify as beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmers or ranchers are eligible for a service fee waiver and a 50 percent reduction of buy-up premium.

Honey producers selecting buy-up coverage must pay the service fee in addition to a premium equal to the product of multiplying the producer's share, times the highest number of eligible colonies reported at any time during the crop year, times the approved yield, times the coverage level, times 100 percent of the average market price, times 5.25 percent.

ELAP

ELAP OVERVIEW

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish who have losses because of disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, including losses because of blizzards and wildfires.

Eligible Honeybee Losses

Colony Loss:

- Losses in excess of normal mortality as a direct result of an eligible adverse weather or loss condition. The normal mortality rate for 2020 is 22 percent.
- Physically located in the county where the eligible adverse weather or loss condition occurred on the beginning date of the eligible adverse weather or loss condition.

Hive Loss:

- Damaged or destroyed as a result of an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition.

Purchased Feed:

- Purchased feed intended for honeybees that was lost, or additional feed purchased above normal quantities to sustain honeybees for a period of time until additional feed becomes available because of an eligible adverse weather or eligible loss condition.





NAP

Eligible Causes of Loss

Eligible causes of loss must be the result of a natural disaster.

- Damaging weather, such as drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind, lightning or hurricanes;
- Adverse natural occurrences, such as earthquake or flood; and
- Conditions related to damaging weather or adverse natural occurrences, such as excessive heat, plant disease, volcanic smog, wildfire or insect infestation may also be considered.

The natural disaster must occur during the coverage period, before or during harvest, and must directly affect the eligible crop.

How Do I Earn a Payment?

Honey producers may request NAP coverage by completing an Application for Coverage and paying the NAP service fee by the application closing date. The NAP application closing date for honey is December 31 of the prior calendar year. Buy-Up coverage premiums will be billed at a later date.

Producers must timely file acreage (colony) reports and production records by reporting pounds of honey produced per colony of bees per crop year. When a natural disaster occurs, a Notice of Loss must be filed within 15 calendar days of the date of the disaster.

Losses will be calculated by multiplying the producer's highest number of eligible colonies reported at any time in the crop year times the producer's approved yield and subtracting the producer's total actual and assigned production of honey from all the producer's colonies.

Producers requesting payment must file an application for payment no later than March 1 of the subsequent calendar year.

ELAP

Eligible Adverse Weather Events and Loss Conditions for Colony & Hive Losses

For honeybee colony and hive losses to be eligible, the honeybee producer must have suffered physical loss of honeybee colonies or hive loss because of an eligible adverse weather event or loss condition, including but not limited to:

- colony collapse disorder (colony loss only);
- eligible extreme cold, eligible sustained cold, and eligible winter storm as defined in 1-ELAP, Exhibit 2, for colony losses only; or
- earthquake, excessive wind, flood, hurricane, lightning, tornado, volcanic eruption or wildfire.



NAP

Producer Responsibilities

1. OBTAIN COVERAGE

Eligible producers must apply for coverage and pay the applicable service fee or certify as a beginning limited resource socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmer/ rancher by December 31 preceding the production year. (Example: Coverage for 2021 production of honey must be obtained by December 31, 2020).

- NAP offers Basic 50/55 coverage equivalent to CAT insurance at 50 percent of a producer's approved yield and 55 percent of the average market price,
- Buy-up coverage levels are available from 50 percent to 65 percent of the approved yield, in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price.

2. REPORT ACREAGE

FSA uses acreage reports to verify the existence of the crop, to record the number of colonies, and report the names and shares of all producers sharing in the colonies for producing honey, pollinating, or breeding. Honey producers must file their report by January 2 and must notify the administrative FSA county office within 30 calendar days when changes occur in the:

- Total number of colonies.
- Names of additional counties to which bees are moved.

The colony and the production reports are used to calculate the approved yield (expected production for a crop year). The highest number of eligible colonies reported at any time in the crop year is used.

3. NOTIFY FSA WHEN A LOSS OCCURS

When a loss occurs, the producer must notify the FSA county office and complete a notice of loss within 15 calendar days of the earlier of:

- A natural disaster occurrence;
- the date a loss is apparent; or
- the normal harvest date.

4. FILE APPLICATION FOR PAYMENT

Producers requesting payment must provide acceptable production records and file an application for payment no later than March 1 of the subsequent calendar year.

ELAP

Producer Responsibilities

1. REPORT ACREAGE

FSA uses acreage reports to verify the existence of the honeybee colonies, record the number of colonies, and report the names and shares of all producers sharing in the colonies for producing honey, pollinating, or breeding.

Honeybee producers must file their acreage report by January 2 and must complete additional acreage reports in the recording FSA county office within 30 calendar days of when colonies are:

- acquired, split, bought, or sold.
- transported into, or out of the county.

2. NOTIFY FSA WHEN A LOSS OCCURS

When a loss occurs, the producer must notify the FSA county office and complete a notice of loss no later than the program application deadline of January 30 following the program year in which the loss occurred.

A notice of loss is part of the application process.

3. FILE APPLICATION FOR PAYMENT AND PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION

In addition to the notice of loss, a participant must submit a completed application for payment no later than January 30, after the end of the program year in which the loss occurred. The ELAP program year is January 1 – December 31.

4. DOCUMENTATION FOR PRODUCERS TO PROVIDE:

For eligible honeybee colony and hive losses, the participant must provide:

- proof of beginning inventory for the program year of honeybee colonies and honeybee hives such as, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - a report of acreage (colonies reported).
 - loan records.
 - private insurance documents.
 - property tax records.
 - records of purchase and sales transaction of honeybee colonies and hives throughout the program year.
 - state colony registration.

NAP

5. PROVIDE PRODUCTION TO UPDATE APPROVED YIELD

It is the producer's responsibility to maintain verifiable or reliable production evidence to support their actual production history (APH). The approved yield is an average of a producer's APH for a minimum of four to a maximum of 10 crop years. To calculate APH, FSA divides a producer's total production by the highest number of eligible colonies reported at any time during the year.

Honey production must be reported by January 2 following the crop year in which a report of colonies was filed. The total amount of honey production includes all honey harvested in the calendar year. Please maintain storage or sales records for future verification.

ELAP

- proof that the participant is following best management practices as determined by the county committee, such as, but not limited to documentation to substantiate that the producer provided the following:
 - proper nutrition for honeybee colonies.
 - preventative treatment for varroa mites and disease.
 - proper maintenance and hygiene of hive equipment.
 - proper colony management.
 - any additional documentation the producer may have, such as State health certifications for varroa mite or noseema levels reflecting the lack of mites or disease.
 - if the participant was paid for a loss of honeybee colony or hive in either or both of the previous two years, the participant must provide documentation to substantiate beginning inventory for the current year for which the loss occurred.
- For honeybee colony losses due to CCD, the participant must provide a producer certification that the loss was a direct result of at least three of the five symptoms of CCD.

For More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements or restrictions may apply. To find more information about FSA disaster assistance programs, visit [farmers.gov](https://www.farmers.gov) or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator).

Bee in the Know

Assistance for Honey Producers From Plants to Product



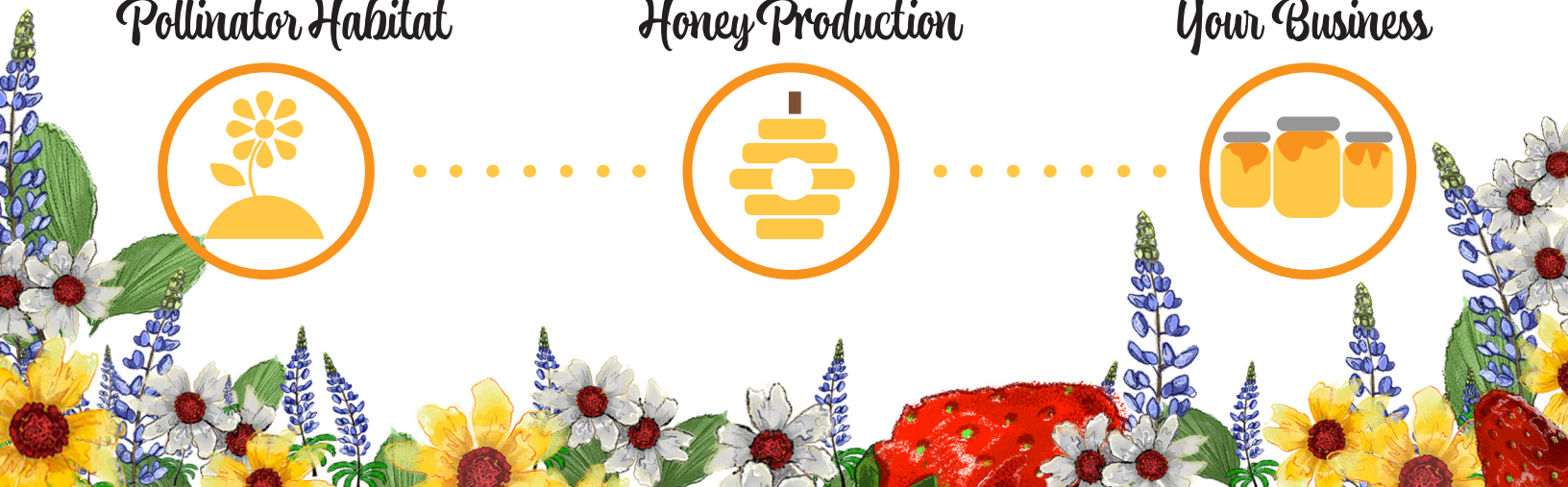
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has programs to help honey producers every step of the way — from plants to the final product. We have programs to help protect and conserve habitat, protect your investments and recover from disasters impacting your operation.



Pollinator Habitat

Honey Production

Your Business





Assistance for Pollinator Habitat

The **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and the **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)** provide support through technical and financial assistance to provide safe and diverse food sources for honeybees.

For example, NRCS helps producers implement voluntary conservation practices such as planting cover crops, wildflowers and native grasses in buffers and areas not in production as well as improving management of grazing lands.

In total, more than three dozen NRCS conservation practices provide benefits to pollinators like honeybees. The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, **Conservation Stewardship Program**

(CSP) and **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provide assistance to help implement these practices. FSA's **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. Both NRCS and FSA programs encourage producers to plant appropriate grasses, wildflowers, trees and shrubs to establish wildlife habitat, diverse pasture and rangelands, filter strips or riparian buffers. USDA conservation lands offer tremendous benefits to pollinators that require diverse floral blooms over the entire growing season as well as safe placement of honeybee colonies.



Assistance for Honeybees

FSA's **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** covers colony losses, honeybee hive losses and honeybee feed losses in instances where these have been destroyed by an



eligible natural disaster or, in the case of colony losses, because of Colony Collapse Disorder. Colony losses must be in excess of normal mortality. Eligible honeybees include bees housed in a managed hive and used for honey production, pollination or honeybee breeding.

Assistance for Honey

FSA's **Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** provides financial assistance to producers of table and non-table honey produced commercially for human consumption. Honey producers must apply for coverage and pay a service fee by the application closing date, which for honey is December 31 of the prior calendar year. Producers must timely file acreage (colony) reports and production records by reporting pounds of honey produced per colony of bees per crop year.

Honey from eligible floral sources and meeting FSA's storage requirements may be pledged as security for **Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL)**. These short-term loans provide interim financing to allow you to sell your product when market conditions are more

favorable. Alternatively, **Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP)** may be available in lieu of securing a MAL. The final loan availability date is March 31 following the crop year.

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFLs) provide low-interest financing for equipment and structures needed for you to store, handle and/or transport your honey. Examples of eligible equipment include:

- A storage building for harvested honey.
- Equipment to maintain and monitor the quality of stored honey.
- Portable storage containers, essential to the proper storage of honey.
- Bulk tanks suitable for storing honey.
- Bottler systems for honey (excludes the honey containers).
- Equipment for moving honey, such as a forklift or hand truck.

Processing equipment, packing containers and storage space for bees or beehives are not eligible.





Assistance for Your Business

FSA offers **direct** and **guaranteed loans** to farmers and ranchers to promote, build and sustain family farms for a thriving agricultural economy. This includes farm operating and ownership loans. **Youth loans** are also available to those between the ages of 10 and 20 years of age for up to \$5,000.

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on the farm under one insurance policy. The **Apiculture Pilot Insurance Rainfall Index Program (API)** provides a safety net for beekeepers' primary income sources – honey, pollen collection, wax, and breeding stock. You can buy a WFRP or an API policy from a crop insurance agent by the sales closing date for your county.

Don't Forget

- Establish a farm number with FSA if you're new to working with us.
- Report your honeybee colonies to FSA by January 2 each year. These reports verify the existence of colonies and are essential to program participation.
- Notify FSA when a loss occurs to your colonies, hives, or honeybee feed.
- Talk to NRCS and FSA to see how we can establish or enhance pollinators on your operation.
- Ask your crop insurance agent about risk management options for your operation.

Working with Us

You can learn more about USDA assistance for honey producers at your local USDA Service Center. Find your local USDA Service Center at **farmers.gov/service-locator**. If you're new to working with us, check out **farmers.gov/newfarmers** to learn how to get started.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

