

Columbia County Ag Reporter

July/August 2020



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
COLUMBIA COUNTY

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Agricultural newsletter for Columbia
County landowners and residents

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- ◆ Columbia County Land & Water Dept. Updates (pg. 10)
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Web Site:

<https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/>



COLUMBIA
COUNTY

Ag Reporter Calendar of Events

July

All Month—Watch for On-line Seminars and Virtual Field Days

3 Extension Office Closed for the Holiday

6 George on Furlough—No calls, no emails...

9-12 Lodi Ag Fair **CANCELLED**

21-23rd Farm Tech Days postponed to July 20-22, 2021.

Still will be held in Eau Claire County—**RESCHEDULED FOR 2021**

22-26th Columbia County Fair, Portage **CANCELLED**

August

All Month—Watch for On-line Seminars and Virtual Field Days

6-16th Wisconsin State Fair **CANCELLED**

Arlington Argonomy/Soils Field Day **CANCELLED**

UW-Madison, Division of Extension is committed to keeping people safe during the coronavirus pandemic. We are receiving guidance from UW-Madison about the 15th of each month to determine what types of programming we may perform during the following month. Currently, we are restricted to only hold meetings of 10 or less people through the month of July and must secure permission from our Area Extension Directors in order to hold these events. Special safety plans must be in place for meetings to take place. Watch for more up to the minute changes in the Friday "Ag Reporter Snapshot" electronic newsletter.



The Columbia County **Ag Calendar and Deadlines** webpage is located at

<http://columbia.uwex.edu/ag-calendar-and-deadlines/>.

Columbia County Extension Office Hours - 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant, is in the office Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm, her normal working hours. Guidance from UW-Madison is allowing Extension Educators to slowly return to the office on a limited basis. We must continue social distancing, wear facemasks when meeting the public and may not have more than two Educators in the office at a time. Columbia County Extension Educators are taking turns coming to the office to keep the office open until 4:30 pm to serve our county residents. At other times we continue to work remotely using appropriate technology.

George is able to begin making some farm visits again. He needs to complete a programming request form, obtain permission from the Area Extension Director and Agriculture Institute Director. This takes a couple of days to complete so please understand and be patient. We are doing our best to keep our clients, the public, and our Educators safe from Covid 19. It will take awhile to get back to normal, or to whatever the new normal might be.

Columbia County Extension is still only a phone call or email away. That has not changed. We are still able to provide up to date, University research based answers and advice in a timely manner.



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COLUMBIA COUNTY

Badger Crop Connect

Keep up to date with current crop scouting and production issues. Watch for opportunities to connect with UW – Madison Agronomy Specialists.

Typically, we meet online twice per month on Wednesdays from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm. Registration and connection information is sent out in the Friday Ag Reporter Snapshot, the weekly Ag Newsletter from Columbia County Extension. If you are not receiving this electronic newsletter, contact Sarah Millard (sarah.millard@wisc.edu) or George Koepp (george.koepp@wisc.edu) to have your name added to the email list.



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**Badger Crop
Connect**

TIMELY CROP UPDATES FOR WISCONSIN

Cover Crops Following Wheat in Wisconsin

Overview

Wisconsin's short growing season doesn't provide a lot of time for growing cover crops. However, the early harvest of winter wheat allows an excellent window for cover crops to grow, protect the soil and provide other benefits. NRCS has some dollars to help farmers plant cover crops. If you are new to the cover crop practice, now is a great time to start and try a few acres.

Cover crop recommendations typically change depending on where you are in Wisconsin but because of the early harvest of wheat, cover crop choices are pretty similar across the state.

Competition from volunteer or re-seeded grain from the combine can sometimes present a challenge. If this is expected, it may be advantageous to allow growth of the volunteer grain to begin and apply a non-selective herbicide before planting the cover crop. This may be difficult if the cereal grain is harvested after mid-July.

Cover Crop Options for Winter Wheat in Wisconsin

Small grains/grasses

Oats and spring barley will grow rapidly in late summer and continue until a hard freeze. Spring barley and oats will typically have three months or more to grow after wheat harvest and will produce significant amounts of residue to aid in reducing soil erosion the following spring. Barley and oats can also be harvested in the fall as a forage, however this reduces their effectiveness in reducing spring erosion.

Annual ryegrass (ARG) is a somewhat popular and economical cover crop but planting ARG is discouraged due to concerns with its potential to become a difficult to control weed. It can overwinter in the Midwest with mild conditions. It can be a prolific seed producer in the seeding year and several glyphosate resistant biotypes have been identified. If it over-winters, it can be difficult to control with herbicides.

Winter rye or winter triticale can be planted August-September for a late summer and over-winter cover. Planted in August, rye will produce a thick cover in the fall and then will grow rapidly in early spring. Rye and triticale used as cover crops need to be terminated by late April before they grow too large and become difficult to manage. Rye and triticale can also be harvested in the spring as a forage.

Brassicas (radishes and turnips)

Radish (e.g., Tillage, Groundhog, NitrDaikon, oilseed or forage radish) is a fast growing cover crop, capable of producing a large taproot that can extend several feet deep if planted in July or August. These radishes are often touted to alleviate soil compaction by "bio-drilling" down through compacted layers within the crop root zone. Research suggests, however, that radish root growth can be restricted by compaction zones and often does not break up compaction.

Other brassicas: Turnips, Rapeseed, will have similar tap-rooting to radish, with less root volume. Turnips typically winter kill, but depending on the variety, rapeseed will likely survive the winter and require herbicide termination in the spring. Due to a more rapid rate of decomposition, as compared to the grasses, monoculture stands of turnips and/or radishes often do not provide sufficient residue cover for erosion reduction. Choosing varieties that are slow to bolt and have limited hard seed will reduce the likelihood of volunteer plants during the next growing season.

All brassicas are good options to diversify rotations. Because there are no brassicas in our traditional crop rotations, adding a brassica may help diversify the soil microbial community.

Legumes

Legumes will fix nitrogen (N) as they grow and provide nitrogen to next year's crop. Clovers are also harvestable as forage. All are good choices for a wheat-corn-soybean grain crop rotation. Legumes are typically planted in a mixture with grasses or grasses and brassicas in order to provide enough spring residue cover for erosion reduction.

Berseem clover is fast-growing clover that will winter kill. Performance may be limited with dry conditions.

Crimson clover typically winter kills but may, in a warm winter, survive in Wisconsin. It is slightly more tolerant of dry conditions than berseem, but pH sensitive. Grows fast in spring if it survives the winter.

Field peas are a large-seeded, cool season annual. Best companion-seeded with a spring cereal grain to encourage climbing and minimize lodging.

Medium red clover (MRC) is short-lived perennial that is best companion planted with spring cereal grains or frost seeded (March-April) into fall established cereal grains.

Mixes

Research is very limited in terms of the soil health benefits that accrue from planting particular species of cover or green manure crops. Some principles with likely merit:

- Species with high biomass potential will add more organic material and recycle more nutrients;
- The fibrous root structures of cereal grains and forage grasses improve soil structure and may help alleviate compaction.

Planting a multi-species mix that includes a grass, legume and brassica MAY achieve an ecological synergy that includes enhanced biological and physical benefits to soil health.

Suggested mixes for radish plantings:

- Radish at 5 to 8 lbs per-acre + 30 lbs per-acre oats or spring barley.
- Radish, 5 to 8 lbs per-acre + 35 lbs field peas + 30 lbs per-acre oats or spring barley
- Radish, 5 lbs per-acre + 8 lbs berseem clover + 10 lbs annual ryegrass

Check out the [Midwest Cover Crop tool](http://mccc.msu.edu/) for more help with cover crop selection using this link: <http://mccc.msu.edu/>

Feel free to give George a call (608-742-9682) or send an email (george.koepp@wisc.edu) for help in making cover crop choice decisions. It is better for the soil to have a planned crop growing during our entire growing season, than to have it fallow or growing weeds. Living plant roots improve soil structure and organic matter, and reduce compaction over time.



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Damon Smith's Pointers For Making Fungicide Decisions on Corn UW-Madison Extension Field Crop Pathologist

Know what your "target disease" is and focus on making good decisions. Are you dealing with foliar diseases or ear/stalk diseases?

Foliar Diseases – Tar Spot, Gray Leaf Spot, or Northern Corn Leaf Blight

1. The best time to apply fungicide for foliar disease control in WI corn is during the VT-R1 growth stages.
2. Use past history of disease, scouting and weather forecasts to make spray decisions.
3. Scout, scout, scout.
4. Consider the susceptibility of the hybrid being grown, residue and irrigation
5. Take homes:
 - A. Timing is more important than product
 - B. Best chance for economic return = VT/R1 growth stage
 - C. Protect the ear leaves—they are the most productive

Ear/Stalk Diseases – Gibberella Ear Rot

1. The best time to apply fungicide for ear rot control in WI is to target R1 growth stage and 7-10 days there after.
2. Use past history of disease, scouting and weather forecasts to make spray decisions.
3. Scout, scout, scout.
4. Consider the susceptibility of the hybrid being grown, residue and irrigation.
5. Choose a mixed mode of action product that contains a DMI (Frac group 3) as one of the components.

In-field Disease Management Reducing DON

1. DON can accumulate in ears and stalks
2. Choose hybrids with resistance – no silver bullet
3. Balance DON reductions strategies with foliar disease control
4. Fungicide may not always reduce DON or foliar diseases to acceptable levels
5. Best all around fungicide timing is still likely R1 growth stage
6. Plant stress can play a major roll in mycotoxin accumulation

Tactics to improve success in fighting corn diseases

1. Start with resistant hybrids
2. Manage corn residue
3. Rotate crops

Wisconsin Pest Bulletin 6-18-20 Updates from WDATCP

TRUE ARMYWORM:

Caterpillars of various sizes are appearing in the perimeter rows of corn. Populations are currently below economically significant levels, but larvae may become locally abundant before the end of the month. Routine scouting of corn and wheat should begin in the week ahead.

EUROPEAN CORN BORER:

Larvae produced by spring moths are hatching, and fresh whorl feeding injury by first-instar larvae is detectable in the tallest southern and western Wisconsin cornfields. The treatment window for first-generation corn borers has opened near Beloit and in other advanced areas of the state with the accumulation of 800 degree days (modified base 50°F).

JAPANESE BEETLE:

Sightings have been reported from two additional southern Wisconsin counties (Dane and Wisconsin Pest Bulletin Volume 65 No. 08 June 18, 2020 63 Rock) since the first beetles of the season were observed on June 10. Beetle emergence will increase over the next several weeks and peak in late July. Soil-applied insecticides to control this pest must be made 3-4 weeks in advance of emergence and are no longer advised for southern and central Wisconsin.

ALFALFA WEEVIL:

The peak larval damage period will end by late June (800 degree days base 48°F) as populations reach the non-feeding pupal stage. Weevil pressure has been low this spring. The average count in 120 first-crop alfalfa fields sampled from May 22-June 17 was just 0.09 per sweep (9 per 100 sweeps) and leaf tip feeding was less than 35% in all surveyed fields.

POTATO LEAFHOPPER:

Recent alfalfa surveys found low averages varying from 0.02-0.3 per sweep, with the highest count (34 per 100 sweeps) observed in Iowa County. Nymphs, which can be an indicator of population increase, should begin appearing the end of June.

To obtain the latest DATCP WI Pest Bulletin follow this link:

<https://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/pb/aboutus.jsp>



COLUMBIA
COUNTY

By Kurt Calkins, Director of Columbia County
Land & Water Conservation

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates

Farmland Preservation Self-Certification Post Card:

FPP participants will be required to maintain their eligibility as follows:

Annually submit a FPP Self Certification Postcard (July 15th)

Annually submit a 590 NMP Checklist **Form ARM-LWR-480**

Receive an onsite NR 151 compliance status review once every 4 years
(Year determined by LWCD)

The self-certification postcards have been mailed to all Farmland Preservation participants the first week of June. A return date of July 15, 2020, is required.

Participants will have the option to complete the postcard through an online log-in process (under www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/), or return the postcard to the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department. All postcards must be postmarked before July 15, 2020, or they will be charged a \$10.00 late fee.

FPP Participants who do **Not** maintain their eligibility by submitting the annual self-certification postcard, annually providing a 590 Nutrient Management Checklist and maintaining NR 151 Compliance can have their Certificate of Compliance ID # voided with the Department of Revenue, thus removing their ability to claim the Farmland preservation Tax Credit for the applicable tax season. NR 151 conservation compliance reviews will begin for a fourth of the FPP participants in 2019. For questions, please contact the LWCD office at 608-742-9670.

Farmland Preservation Program Required Farm Inspections:

The Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department will be conducting the required farm inspections throughout 2020 for ¼ of the certified program participants. It is important that you understand the questions asked thru the self-certification process. If you are unsure of your status, or what a question means, please contact the LWCD and we will help you thru it. As part of our inspection process, we will use a combination of in office technology and onsite evaluations to monitor your status. If we find a compliance issue, our first step will be to work with you to bring it into compliance, but it could jeopardize your participation. This link is a quick reference to the range of evaluation components we will be looking at: <http://runoffinfo.uwex.edu/pdf/WisRunoffRules.pdf>

2021 Nutrient Management Farmer Education Cost-Share

Assistance Available: The Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department in cooperation with UW-Extension Columbia County have cost-share funds available for our Nutrient Management Training Program participants. These grant funds will allow us to provide class participants a stipend of up to \$1,100 per landowner for taking the class and completing a certified 590 NMP.

Land & Water Conservation Department Updates

Final details will be worked out in the coming months, but this grant will allow us to offset soil testing costs and plan development for landowners. We pursued this funding opportunity to increase incentives options available to landowners. Often times direct cost share opportunities are used, but those funds are currently somewhat limited based on our current budget, so this will be another opportunity for us to encourage more landowners to go through the process and learn the benefits of using a NMP. If you are interested in participating in our 2021 classes which begin January, 2021, please contact UW-Extension at 608-742-9680 or LWCD 608-742-9670 to discuss the program and get signed up early.

Drinking Water Program - August, 2020

The Towns of Courtland, Randolph, Scott and Springvale, in collaboration with Columbia County, will offer rural well users an opportunity to test their drinking water in August, 2020. There will be a mailing sent out for these town residents in the upcoming weeks. This program was rescheduled from our original March date because of the COVID-19 situation. We are making some modifications to the program as a result of this current COVID-19 situation. The modifications will include prepayment and online ordering of testing kits. The kits will be mailed directly to participants, and then dropped off at the Village of Cambria Tarrant Lake Park Shelter on Monday, August 24, 2020. There will be 3 testing kit options available. There will be an online educational meeting regarding your results from the tests in September. Watch your mail for updates on program participation information if you are a resident in one of the of these towns. If you have any questions after you receive the information for this program in the mail, please feel free to call the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department or Columbia County UW-Extension Office, (608) 742-9670 or (608) 742-9680.

2021-2030 Land and Water Resource Management Plan

The 2021-2030 Plan was approved by the State of Wisconsin and also the Columbia County Board of Supervisors. The final version is available on our webpage under Programs if you wish to view it. The plan was updated and revisions were made based on meetings involving a Citizen's Advisory Group consisting of local members, agency members, farmers and citizens that volunteered through 2 public meetings. The plan went to DATCP in June and was approved, then on to County Board for the June meeting, and the final plan has evolved. Thank you for all of those that helped with this process. If you wish to view the plan, the link is on our webpage (listed under Columbia County Land & Water Resource Management Final Plan for 2021-2030: <https://www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/lwcd/LandWaterHome/Programs/LandWaterResourceManagement/tabid/742/Default.aspx>



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Dairy Situation and Outlook, June 18, 2020

Bob Cropp, University of Wisconsin - Madison

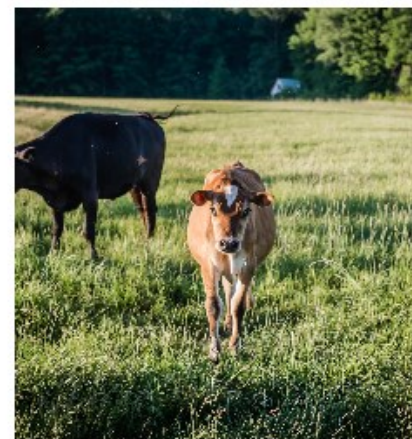
Milk prices have been volatile, but it looks like volatility will be a record in 2020. In January, the Class III prices was \$17.05. By May it had fallen to \$12.14. But it looks like June will be above \$20. Class IV has also been volatile with January at \$16.65 falling to \$10.67 in May and will be about \$13.35 in June.

What factors drove these big changes in milk prices? The sharp drop in prices in May was the result of the COVID-19 virus shutting down schools, universities, restaurants, and food service which caused a big drop in the sales of milk, cheese, and butter. Milk production was also at a relatively high level with March production 2.8% higher than the year before resulting in more milk than milk plants could handle with the loss of sales. Dairy farmers were asked to lower milk production and some were asked to dump milk. But then in May and continuing in June sales of milk, cheese, and butter while not back to the levels prior to COVID-19, they started to improve. Restaurants are slowly reopening, and food service sales are increasing. Restaurants and food service needed to place rather big orders of cheese and butter to restock their supplies. With people staying at home retail sales of milk, cheese and butter increased. By May 15th and into June the Farmers to Family Food Box Program kicked in and the government bought rather large quantities of milk and cheese. And on the supply side dairy cooperatives implemented base excess plans to their producers to reduce milk production. So, all these activities tightened the supply demand situation and milk prices responded. This shows we can have big changes in milk prices from relatively small changes in supply and demand.

USDA's milk production report showed dairy farmers did reduce milk production. Milk cow numbers declined by 11,000 head from April to May and by 15,000 head March to May. May cow numbers were still 0.4% higher than a year ago but milk per cow was 1.5% lower resulting in May milk production to be 1.1% lower than a year ago. The two leading dairy states California and Wisconsin had lower milk production of 1.5% and 3.1% respectively. Both had reduced cow numbers with California down 4,000 head and Wisconsin 12,000 head. May milk production was lower than a year ago by 3.7% in New York and Pennsylvania, 1.9% in Minnesota, 2.0% in Iowa, 0.4% in Michigan and 7.2% in New Mexico. But milk production was up by 4.8% in Idaho, 4.6% by Oregon, 2.1% in Kansas and 9.7% in South Dakota. South Dakota had added 11,000 cows.

The Class III price is driven by the cheese price. On the CME 40-pound block cheddar was as high as \$2.0225 per pound in January. Got as low as \$1.00 in April and as high as \$2.585 in June and is now \$2.50. Cheddar barrels were as high as \$1.50 per pound in January, got as low as \$1.00 in April and as high as \$2.425 in June and is now \$2.28. The price of whey also impacts the Class III price but has not shown any real strength in May or June. The Class IV price is driven by the price of butter and nonfat dry milk. Butter was as high as \$1.90 per pound in January. Got as low as \$1.10 per pound in April and as high as \$2.015 in June and is now \$1.8075. Nonfat dry milk was as high as \$1.24 per pound in January. Got as low as \$0.80 in April and was as high as \$1.05 in June and is now \$1.02.

The big question is how long can these milk prices hold? A big part of the answer is milk production. Hopefully, dairy farmers do not respond to higher milk prices by increasing production again. We are entering the seasonal low in milk production during July through September. So, milk production will be declining and hopefully stay below year ago levels over the next few months. The question is, will schools and universities reopen. It looks like some will and some may stay with online instruction. Will restaurants be allowed to open to a larger capacity and will consumers be willing to go to restaurants. USDA has announced it will extend purchases of dairy products under the Food Box Program in July and August which would be positive for milk prices. This fall, cheese and butter plants will build stocks to meet the seasonal increase in demand for the holidays. Will there be a second surge in COVID-19? So, there is a lot of uncertainty as to milk prices for the remainder of the year. But prices should remain rather strong for the next 2 or 3 months at least. Beyond that there is more uncertainty. Dairy futures currently are rather optimistic. Class III futures is \$20 in July, \$18's in August, high \$17's in September before trailing off to the \$16's by November and December. Dairy producers should consider taking advantage of these prices with risk management tools such as the Dairy Revenue Protection Program, Class III futures and options, forward contracting some of their milk with a milk buyer because there is a greater probability that milk prices could fall from these current futures prices than increase.



NEW ONLINE PASTURE MANAGEMENT COURSE

Based off of 25 years of Pasture Management taught at UW Madison

The pasture management course is a training program in basic cool-season pasture management and guides the creation of a personalized pasture management plan.

Through eleven video recorded lectures, you'll learn about

- ◆ pasture establishment
- ◆ water systems
- ◆ animal requirements
- ◆ and more!

For more information about the course, contact Nadia Alber at nalber@wisc.edu or call at (608)924-1154 or visit www.wsbdf.wisc.edu/program-offerings/

Nominations Open for the 2020 FSA County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages all farmers, ranchers, and FSA program participants to take part in the Columbia County Committee election nomination process.

FSA's county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. One-third of the seats on these committees are open for election each year. For 2020, an election will be held in LAA 2, which includes Fort Winnebago, Leeds, Lowville, Marcellon, Otsego, Pacific, and Wyocena Townships.

County committees may have an appointed advisor to further represent the local interests of underserved farmers and ranchers. Underserved producers are beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers and landowners and/or operators who have limited resources.

All nomination forms for the 2020 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2020. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: fsa.usda.gov/elections.



*Lexie Meyer, County Executive Director,
USDA - Farm Service Agency,
2912 Red Fox Run, Portage, WI 53901
608.742.5361 Ext. 7350*

United States Department of Agriculture

Farmers and Ranchers in Wisconsin Can Now Apply for Financial Assistance through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Agricultural producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online, and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. The agency set up a call center in order to simplify how they serve new customers across the nation.

Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for vital 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.

We also want to remind producers that the program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply.

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.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from farmers.gov/cfap. Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments.

Additionally, producers in search of one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. This is a good first step before a producer engages the team at the FSA county office at their local USDA Service Center.

Farmers and Ranchers in Wisconsin Can Now Apply for Financial Assistance through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (con't.)

Applying for Assistance

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office. Those who use the online calculator tool will be able to print off a pre-filled CFAP application, sign, and submit to your local FSA office either electronically or via hand delivery. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred method. Find contact information for your local office at farmers.gov/cfap.

Documentation to support the producer's application and certification may be requested after the application is filed. FSA has streamlined the signup process to not require an acreage report at the time of application and a USDA farm number may not be immediately needed.

Additional Commodities

USDA is also establishing a process for the public to identify additional commodities for potential inclusion in CFAP. Specifically, USDA is looking for data on agricultural commodities, that are not currently eligible for CFAP, that the public believes to have either:

1. suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
2. shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, or
3. not left the farm or remained unharvested as mature crops.

More information about this process is available on farmers.gov/cfap.

More Information

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

USDA Expands Farmers.gov Features to Help Manage Conservation Activities

New self-service features on farmers.gov will help farmers and ranchers manage their conservation activities online and request assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"These conservation features join a number of others already available through farmers.gov, including the ability to view farm loan information," said Angela Biggs, State Conservationist in Wisconsin. "As more content and capabilities are added, farmers.gov is quickly becoming the online hub for producers to find resources, submit applications and assistance requests and make connections. Now, amid this pandemic, we recognize the importance of online options for producers to manage their USDA business."

Producers can access these conservation features by desktop computer, tablet or phone. They can now:

- View, download and e-sign documents;
- Request conservation assistance;
- Reference technical terms and submit questions;
- Access information on current and past conservation practices; and
- View detailed information on all previous and ongoing contracts, including the amount of planned and received cost-share assistance.

The new conservation features enhance the request process with a customer-friendly unified mapping tool that allows farmers to locate areas of interest in minutes, with high-resolution aerial imagery and multi-layered display functionality.

The new features include the most popular functionalities from NRCS's Conservation Client Gateway (CCG) while providing enhanced functionality and an improved user experience. CCG is the NRCS portal for producers, but now these functionalities are being moved to farmers.gov to give producers one place to do business with NRCS, Farm Service Agency and other USDA agencies.

Managing Conservation Online

To access their information, producers will need a [USDA eAuth account](https://farmers.gov/eauth) to login into farmers.gov. After obtaining an eAuth account, producers should visit farmers.gov and sign into the site's authenticated portal via the ["Sign In / Sign Up" link](#) at the top right of the website. Current CCG users can use their existing login and password to access the conservation features on farmers.gov. CCG will continue to be actively maintained and supported until all core components have been migrated to farmers.gov later this year.

Currently, only producers doing business as individuals can view information. Entities, such as an LLC or Trust, or producers doing business on behalf of another customer cannot access the portal at this time, but access is being planned. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Microsoft Edge are the recommended browsers to access the feature.

USDA Expands Farmser.gov Features to Help Manage Conservation Activities (con't)

More Information

USDA is building farmers.gov for farmers, by farmers. Future self-service features available through the farmers.gov portal include: authority for FSA and NRCS customers to work in the portal and act on behalf of their active power-of-attorney entitlements and their current authorities for business entities, updated e-sign capabilities to enhance the single and multi-signer functionalities and a robust document management system that enables customers to download, upload and interact with their important conservation practice and contract documents.

Helping People Help the Land

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

Conservation Stewardship Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



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STAFF DIRECTORY

UW-Extension Columbia County Agriculture Staff

George Koepp, Agriculture Agent.....(608) 742-9682
george.koepp@wisc.edu

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. Monday—Friday

Office: (608) 742-9680; Fax: (608) 742-9862; <https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/agriculture/>

Columbia County Extension Office Staff

Vacant, Administrative Assistant (Admin, Ag, CRD, HDR)(608) 742-9687
Kathleen Haas, Community Resource Educator(608) 742-9683
Vacant, Human Development & Relationships Educator(608) 742-9686
Pat Wagner, Positive Youth Development Educator(608) 742-9685
Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant (4-H)(608) 742-9688
Caitlin Richardson, WI FoodWise Coordinator(608) 742-9693
Web Site: <https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu/>

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UW-Madison Extension Columbia County
Columbia County Ag Reporter
112 E. Edgewater Street, Room 212
Portage, WI 53901
608-742-9680

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