



An Introduction to FSA & NRCS Assistance in Massachusetts

Presentation for
UMass Amherst Extension,
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Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



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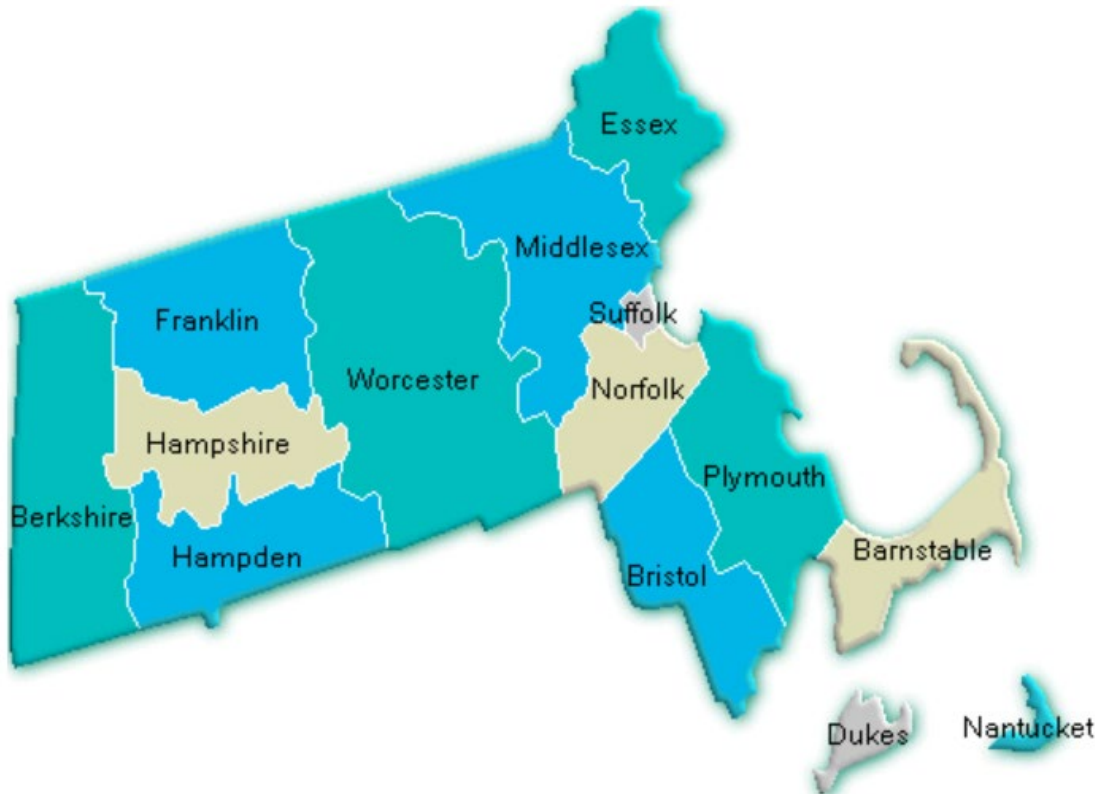


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USDA Service Center Locator

Massachusetts Counties

Click on the map to select a county



Conservation Assistance Overview

"FSA and NRCS are here to help you each step of the way. Always feel free to reach out whenever you have questions!"



ASK YOURSELF

Contact FSA here

Are you already registered with FSA?
AND
Are you already in contact with your NRCS office?

Contact NRCS here

Find out if you have any eligibility paperwork to complete for NRCS and/or FSA
Ask FSA about your farm and tract number

CLICK HERE for the eligibility forms you will need
COMPLETE PAPERWORK with FSA and/or NRCS

FSA and NRCS are here to help you complete your paperwork... just reach out!



Schedule a Site Visit with a NRCS Conservation Planner
During your visit, you and the planner will determine if you are looking for Technical Assistance, Financial Assistance, or BOTH.

Your Conservation Planner will work with you to identify what projects you would like to undertake on your farm based on your resource concerns.

I am looking for Technical Assistance ONLY

I am looking for Technical Assistance and Financial Assistance

Continue Collaboration with your Conservation Planner

Complete and Submit an Application

Your Conservation Planner can help you fill this out!

NRCS Reviews Applications

Wait for Notice of Project Obligation
Your Conservation Planner will inform you of when Application Selection should occur and help you complete Contract Documents.

Glossary of Terms

NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service
FSA: Farm Service Agency
Technical Assistance: Free personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to help producers make informed decisions.
Financial Assistance: Voluntary applications for cost-sharing assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns.
Conservation Planner: An NRCS representative who is assigned to assist you with conservation need and help clarify this process generally.



When all practices are complete and certified the Contract is complete



Producer is paid for each completed practice
Producer fills out completion paperwork

NRCS completes site visit certification and certifies activities

Begin Project Activities
Notify NRCS when each project item is completed





United States Department of Agriculture



USDA Farm Service Agency

Farm Service Agency is equitably serving all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans.

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

What is FSA?

- **Responsible for the administration of programs and policies as outlined by Congress in the Farm Bill.**
- **Facilitates the eligibility determination process for participation with FSA & NRCS.**
- **Farm Programs**
 - **Permanently established programs.**
 - **Ad hoc programs.**
- **Farm Loans**
 - **Lender of First Opportunity.**
 - **Farm Ownership & Farm Operating Loans.**

USDA Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SUPPORTING

- **PRODUCTIVE FARMS AND RANCHES**
- **SECURE & AFFORDABLE FOOD, FIBER AND FUEL**
- **CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES & ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT**

Contact your local FSA office today!



Basics on Getting Started with FSA

- **FSA is often the first step!**
- **Establishing a Farm Number**
 - Required for participation in most USDA programs.
 - Free.
- **Eligibility Paperwork**
 - Required for participation in most USDA programs.
- **Acreage Reports**
 - Required annually for certain USDA program provisions.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Participate consistently between Farm Programs & Farm Loans, and between FSA & NRCS.

It is recommended that you register with FSA in the same way that you file taxes for your agricultural operation.



FSA Farm Loans

- **FSA is a Lender of First Opportunity**
 - Designed to serve producers who are unable to receive loans through conventional, commercial sources.
- **Farm Ownership Loans**
 - May be used to purchase or enlarge a farm or ranch, purchase easements or rights of way needed in the farm's operation, erect or improve buildings, implement soil and water conservation measures, and pay closing costs.
- **Farm Operating Loans**
 - May be used to purchase livestock, poultry, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, fertilizer, chemicals, insurance, and other operating expenses. May also be used for training costs, closing costs, and to reorganize and refinance debt.



KEEPING AMERICA'S AGRICULTURE GROWING

By Helping Farmers and Ranchers get Needed Financing to Start, Expand or Maintain Their Family Farms



FSA Farm Programs

- **Disaster Assistance**
 - Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

- **Income Safety Net/ Commodity Price Support**
 - Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC)

- **Conservation**
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- **Ad Hoc Programming**
 - In response to unforeseen emergencies, like a Global pandemic, severe natural disasters, etc.
 - Emergency Relief Program 2 (ERP2) & Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP)

USDA Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS
Through market, economic,
and weather-related
challenges

Contact your local
FSA office today!

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What is the Natural Resources Conservation Service?

- We are a non-regulatory federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area.
- Our mission is to help people help the land.
- Our workforce consists of skilled natural resource professionals.

NRCS Conservation Assistance

The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers:



Technical Assistance

Financial Assistance





Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

CTA provides free, personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to help producers make informed decisions on their operations. This program is offered at no cost to the producer who can choose whether or not to implement the advice.

Financial Assistance (FA)

FA programs allows producers to apply for cost-sharing assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns. Under this competitive process, applications are ranked against each other and funded by order of conservation impact.



RESOURCE CONCERNS

What is a resource concern?

An expected degradation of a resource below an established threshold or criteria such that the sustainability or intended use is impaired.

Natural resources are defined by NRCS to include soil, water, air, plants, animals, human, and energy considerations.



Conservation Plans: An example of a service.


- **Identify producers' objectives and analyze the natural resources concerns on the land**
- **Include tools and resources customized specifically for each customer, such as:**
 - Land use map
 - Soils information
 - Photos
 - Inventory of resources
 - Economic costs and benefits
 - Schedule of recommended practices
 - Maintenance schedules
 - Engineering notes
- **Plans are a voluntary collaboration between the NRCS conservation planner and the customer**



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EQIP

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.



Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP

- The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation.

A man wearing a grey beanie, glasses, and a camouflage jacket over a green vest is driving a red tractor in a field. The background shows green trees under a clear blue sky.

Agricultural Management Assistance

AMA

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices.

*This information is from the Get Started Guide, which is shared in Additional Resources.

Purpose and Program Notes	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Land/Entities Eligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices. • Only available in 16 States (CT, DE, HI, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NV, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, WY). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Help maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns. • Five-year contracts that can be renewed once.
HUFR Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cropland • Rangeland • Grassland • Pastureland • Non-industrial private forestland • Other land determined by the Secretary of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cropland • Pastureland • Rangeland • Grassland • Non-industrial private forestland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cropland • Pastureland • Rangeland • Non-industrial private forestland • Farmstead • Associated agricultural lands • Agricultural land under the jurisdiction of a Native American Tribe or Tribal Nation • Other private agricultural land • Public lands leased to agricultural producers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance payments available (see details in section on applying for assistance). • HUFR may be eligible for increased financial assistance rates for implementing conservation practices and plans *. • Separate ranking pool for SDFR and BFR (to increase odds of selection for funding). • VFR may receive funding priority *. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HUFR may be eligible for increased financial assistance rates for implementing conservation practices and plans *. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BFR and SDFR have a separate funding ranking pool (to increase odds of selection for funding). • VFR may receive priority for funding *.

For More
information on
Financial Assistance
Programs, click
here: [LINK](#)

Overview

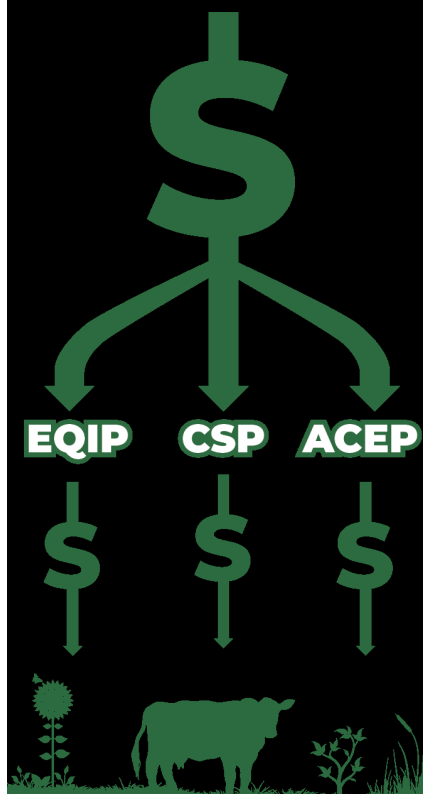
The IRA provides USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with \$19.5 billion in additional funds over five years for its existing conservation programs, including the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#), and the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#).

The IRA directs NRCS to use these additional funds specifically for climate change mitigation, activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve carbon storage, like:

- * Cover Crops
- * Reduced-Till and No-Till
- * Nutrient Management
- * Prescribed Grazing
- * Tree/Shrub Establishment
- * Wetland Restoration

Through this funding, NRCS is seeking to both benefit the climate, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and the producer, by improving access to programs and providing financial and technical assistance to improve their farm, ranch, urban operation or forest land.

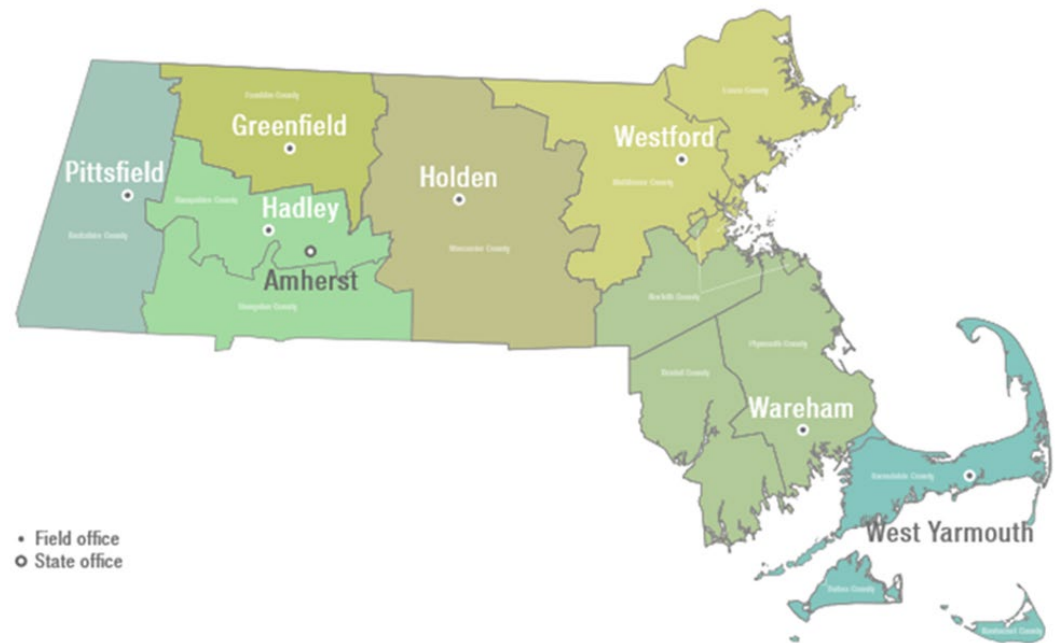
Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)



Timelines for Assistance

- The NRCS assistance workload is based on a first come, first serve basis – contact your service center to indicate your interest.
- If you are interested in Financial Assistance but don't yet have farm records, now is a great time to engage with FSA
- Always feel free to reach out with questions along the way.
- [Local Service Centers | NRCS Massachusetts \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/locations/massachusetts)

NRCS Massachusetts Offices & Areas Served



Beginning Farmer Resources



New Farmer Information:

- [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers | Farmers.gov](#)
- [Get Started Guide](#)

Stay Connected with USDA:

- Signup for Free Email and Text Message Alerts:
[Subscribe to USDA Emails for Farmers | Farmers.gov](#)

CCC-860

- Optional, self-certification form.
- Benefits for some FSA programming.
- Only needs to be filed once for Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning or Veteran producers.
- Limited Resource producers will need to certify and submit annually.

CCC-860 (01-11-23)		U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Commodity Credit Corporation		1A. County FSA Office Name and Address (Including Zip Code)	
SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED, LIMITED RESOURCE, BEGINNING AND VETERAN FARMER OR RANCHER CERTIFICATION		1B. Telephone Number (Area Code)		1C. Program Year	
		2. Applicant's Name and Address			
				INSTRUCTIONS: Complete Parts A, B, C, D, and/or E as applicable. Read the information relating to false certification in Part F. Return this form to the address in Item 1 above.	
INFORMATION: If a legal entity requests to be considered a "socially disadvantaged," "limited resource," "beginning" or "veteran" farmer or rancher, the entity must meet the definition as provided on Page 2 of this form. Farmer or rancher includes: "owners," "operators" and "other producers."					
PART A – CERTIFICATION OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER OR RANCHER					
3. I certify that I am a member of a group listed below, whose members have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. (Check all that apply apply but note that if only "women" is checked without selecting the other category, the selection does not make the applicant socially disadvantaged for conservation programs).					
<input type="checkbox"/> Women.					
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians or Asian Americans, Black or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics.					
PART B – CERTIFICATION OF LIMITED RESOURCE FARMER OR RANCHER					
Limited resource farmer or rancher status can be determined by using a web site available through the Limited Resource Farmer and Rancher Online Self-Determination Tool through Natural Resources Conservation Service at https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/ .					
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. I certify that the following statements are true by checking the box:					
My/our direct or indirect gross farm sales (as individuals, if applicable for the entity or joint operation) do not exceed the amount identified in the Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher Self-Determination Tool for the 2 calendar years that precede the complete taxable year before the relevant program year (see Table 1 on Page 2 of this form), adjusted upwards in later years for any general inflation.					
My/our total household income (as individuals, if applicable for the entity or joint operation) was at or below the national poverty level for a family of four in each of the same 2 previous years (see Table 1 on Page 2 of this form) referenced above.					
PART C – CERTIFICATION OF BEGINNING FARMER OR RANCHER					
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. I certify that the following statements are true by checking the box and providing the date I began farming:					
I (or if applicable, the entity or joint operation) have not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years.					
I (or if applicable, the entity or joint operation) substantially participate in the operation.					
<div style="text-align: right;">_____</div> Date (Month/Year began farming)					
PART D – CERTIFICATION OF VETERAN FARMER OR RANCHER					
6. I certify that I am a farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces as defined in 38 U.S.C. 101(10) and I meet the requirements of at least one of the boxes below: (Check all that apply)					
<input type="checkbox"/> A. I (or if applicable, the entity or joint operation) have not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and began farming in _____					
<div style="text-align: right;">_____</div> Date (Month/Year)					
<input type="checkbox"/> B. I (or if applicable, the entity or joint operation) am a veteran (as defined in 38 U.S.C. 101(2)) who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period _____					
<div style="text-align: right;">_____</div> Date (Month/Year)					



Beginning Farmer Contacts in Massachusetts

- **Natural Resources Conservation Service:**
- Jack Loomis, Outreach Coordinator
- jack.loomis@usda.gov
- 413-230-2494

- **Farm Service Agency:**
- Bailey Albert, Outreach Coordinator
- bailey.albert@usda.gov
- 413-253-4517

- **Rural Development:**
- Lyndon Nichols, Area Director
- lyndon.nichols@usda.gov
- 774-345-7031

- **Risk Management Agency:**
- William Ferris, Risk Management Specialist
- william.ferris@usda.gov
- 919-875-4904



Thank You!

Questions?

- Bailey Albert, FSA
- Jack Loomis, NRCS
- **USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.**