

USDA Assistance for On-Farm Food Safety Expenses

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We mentioned a new program from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to offset some expenses to help an operation prepare for food safety requirements earlier this year. The “Food Safety Certification For Specialty Crops” will cost share expenses for:

- Developing a food safety plan for first-time food safety certification.
- Maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan.
- Food safety certification.
- Certification upload fees.
- Microbiological testing for products, soil amendments and water.
- Training.

The FSCSC application period for 2022 is June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023, and the application period for 2023 will be announced at a later date. FSA will issue payments at the time of application approval for 2022 and after the application period ends for 2023. If calculated payments exceed the amount of available funding, payments will be prorated.

Interested specialty crop producers can apply by completing the FSA-888, Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) application. All documents and additional information can be downloaded at farmers.gov/food-safety. The application, along with other required documents, can be submitted to the FSA office at any USDA Service Center nationwide by mail, fax, hand delivery or via electronic means. Producers can visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find their local FSA office. Specialty crop producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to assist.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

A second program that has been available for several years is the farm storage loan program. This covers cold storage construction along with equipment in a packing operations such as baggers, brush polishers, bulk bin tippers, cement flooring, circulation fans, dip tanks, conveyors, graders, refrigeration units, sizers, sorting bins and tables, trucks, washers, waxers, etc. A grower may borrow up to \$500,000 for up to 12 years. If an operation needs to make major changes in a packinghouse or needs a refrigerated truck this program is worth considering. Contact the FSA office listed above.

RAM-AMS Harmonized GAP Assistance Program

The USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) and USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) have covered the cost of voluntary USDA Harmonized GAP and Harmonized Plus audits over several years. This program ended with the announcement of the new FSCSC program. If you have used the RMA program to cover your audit, seriously consider applying for the new program. The advantage of the new program is it covers many things which RMA did not cover.