

USDA will closely monitor stocks, consumption, imports and all sugar market and program variables on an ongoing basis and may make program adjustments during FY 2025 if needed.

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Individuals who require alternative means of communication for program information (for example, braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and text telephone (TTY) or dial 711 for Telecommunication Relay Service (both voice and text telephone users can initiate this call from any telephone. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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#### Steven Peterson,

*Executive Vice President, Commodity Credit Corporation.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Farm Service Agency

[Docket ID FSA-2023-0005]

### Application Fast Track Pilot Program—Extension

**AGENCY:** Farm Service Agency, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is announcing the extension of the Application Fast Track (AFT) pilot program that was launched August 7, 2023, which continues the expedited processing of qualified direct Operating Loans (OL) and Farm Ownership Loans (FO) to family farmers and ranchers. AFT has been available to all customers nationwide since January 1, 2024. AFT is being extended through December 31, 2025, to allow time for FSA to continue to evaluate the administrative effectiveness of AFT. The initial results of AFT reflect a significant improvement in processing times for all customers, and FSA is continuing to monitor loan performance, and overall satisfaction with the AFT pilot program from both customers and staff.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Houston Bruck; telephone: (202) 650-7874; or by email: [houston.bruck@usda.gov](mailto:houston.bruck@usda.gov). Individuals who require alternative means for communication should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and text telephone (TTY)) or dial 711 for Telecommunications Relay service (both voice and text telephone users can initiate this call from any telephone).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

#### Background

FSA is extending the “Application Fast Track” that was launched August 7, 2023 (88 FR 51260-51265), which continues the expedited processing of qualified direct OLs and FOs to family farmers and ranchers. AFT provides an alternative underwriting process for applicants that meet certain financial benchmarks. AFT has been available to all customers nationwide since January 1, 2024. The AFT pilot provisions are unchanged in this notice from what was announced in the August 7, 2023, notice.

#### Authority

The authority to conduct AFT is provided in section 333D of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (CONACT, 7 U.S.C. 1983d), which authorizes pilot projects of limited scope and duration to evaluate processes and techniques to

improve program efficiency and effectiveness.

#### AFT Initial Results

The initial results of AFT reflect a significant improvement in processing times for all customers, and FSA is continuing to monitor loan performance, overall satisfaction with the AFT pilot program from both customers and staff, and the administrative effectiveness of AFT. The initial results of the AFT pilot program have resulted in approximately 22 percent of customers qualifying for AFT, with significant reduction in processing time for those applications by approximately 8 calendar days. Customers not qualifying for AFT are also realizing an improvement in processing times of approximately 1 calendar day.

#### Comments Received

FSA received three public comments to the initial publication announcing the AFT pilot program. Two of the comments were critical of the Federal government’s involvement in farm lending and are outside the scope of the AFT pilot program. One of the comments expressed concern over the potential for overpayments and that the initial AFT pilot offices were not available in all locations.

The lending program does not provide payments to farmers. Also, after the initial roll-out period of August 2023 through December 2023, the AFT pilot program was expanded to all locations nationwide in January 2024.

#### Contact Information

Questions on AFT may be directed to the Farm Loan Programs staff in the local FSA county office. The local FSA county office may be found at <http://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/USDA-service-centers>.

#### Paperwork Reduction Act Requirements

In accordance with the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), there are no changes the information collection approved by OMB under control numbers 0560-0236 and 0560-0237.

#### Environmental Review

The environmental impacts have been considered in a manner consistent with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and the FSA regulations for compliance with NEPA (7 CFR part 799).

The purpose of AFT is to improve internal underwriting processes to expedite Farm Loan Programs application processing. The limited discretionary aspects of AFT do not have the potential to impact the human environment as they are administrative. Accordingly, these discretionary aspects are covered by the categorical exclusions in 7 CFR 799.31(b)(3)(i) that applies to Farm Loan Programs, provided no extraordinary circumstances are found to exist. As such, the implementation of AFT and the participation in AFT do not constitute major Federal actions that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively. Therefore, FSA will not prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for this action and this document serves as documentation of the programmatic environmental compliance decision for this federal action.

#### Federal Assistance Programs

The title and number of the Federal assistance programs, as found in the Assistance Listing, to which this document applies is 10.406 Farm Operating Loans and 10.407 Farm Ownership Loans.

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**Steven Peterson,**

*Administrator, Farm Service Agency.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Commodity Credit Corporation

#### Farm Service Agency

[Docket ID FSA-2024-009]

#### Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA); Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program 2024 (ODMAP 2024)

**AGENCY:** Commodity Credit Corporation and Farm Service Agency, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notification of funds availability.

**SUMMARY:** The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is announcing the availability of marketing assistance funding to organic dairy operations in the United States. The organic dairy farms have faced—and still continue to face—a variety of challenges, and many are struggling to remain organic dairy operations, which is why FSA is issuing this notice to provide marketing assistance payments to eligible organic dairy operations to help expand the market for organic dairy and increase the consumption of organic dairy. ODMAP 2024 will provide payments to assist organic dairy operations with projected marketing costs for 2024.

**DATES:** *Applications Due Date:* We will accept applications from September 30, 2024 through November 29, 2024.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Douglas Kilgore, (717) 887-0963, [douglas.e.kilgore@usda.gov](mailto:douglas.e.kilgore@usda.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### Background

Over the past several years, organic dairy farms have faced—and continue to face—a variety of challenges, and many are struggling to remain in business. Notably, organic dairy operations have limited ability to pass along cost increases to retailers or consumers without leading to a decrease in domestic consumption of organic dairy. The cost increases have, in many cases, eliminated profit margins, especially among operations that do not have the ability to take advantage of economies of scale. Without intervention, marketing and operational challenges may result in decisions to cease organic dairy operations entirely, which will reduce the organic dairy market.

The organic dairy market is closely linked to the domestic organic feed market. Reduction in organic dairy numbers would consequently result in reduction in organic feed demand. Organic grain and forage commodities have traditionally been relatively small markets where the domestic U.S. demand for organic feed has outstripped supply, resulting in the need for imports. Input costs and availability, especially feed, have seen several years of sustained increases and volatility due to a variety of factors that has impacted increased costs of production. In 2023, drought conditions affected many areas in which organic dairies operate. Many of these operations rely on grazing and therefore required the purchase of forage from a distressed and limited market. Contraction of the organic industry, including availability of organic forage operators, also continues to affect the availability of major organic feed and forage commodities for organic dairy operations.

In addition to these input costs and challenges, organic dairy farmers also have seen higher delivery and marketing costs as in prior years, especially those related to transportation and hauling. As part of the system through which all dairy farmers provide milk and dairy products to consumers, dairies bear the costs of milk hauling and other marketing costs. These marketing costs for organic dairies, however, can be significantly greater than the conventional market because of the unique and limited marketing system structure within the United States. In addition, participants in the organic dairy sector must take additional steps to keep the organic milk separated and its status as organic clearly preserved. In some cases, these requirements necessitate longer and more costly hauling routes, including the costs of finding truck drivers willing to cover