



Economic Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Economic
Research
Service

Economic
Information
Bulletin
Number 260

November 2023

U.S. Agricultural Policy Review, 2022

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Recommended citation format for this publication:

Baldwin, K., Williams, B., Sichko, C., Tsiboe, F., Toossi, S., Jones, J., Turner, D., & Raszap Skorbiansky, S. (2023). *U.S. agricultural policy review, 2022* (Report No. EIB-260). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.



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U.S. Agricultural Policy Review, 2022

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Abstract

This is the 2022 edition of the annual series documenting developments in U.S. agricultural policies, with a focus on policies related to production agriculture, agrofood value chains, and food and nutrition assistance. Developments related to production agriculture include temporary assistance programs in response to extreme weather and the continuing effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic; changes to standing farm programs, including commodity programs, conservation programs, credit programs, and crop insurance; the development of new programs, including the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, and the allocation of additional resources for existing USDA conservation programs to support the adoption of certain practices with climate mitigation benefits; the introduction of new measures and programs focused on improving equity; updates to USDA organic regulations and the launch of new programs to support producers transitioning to organic operations; and developments in certain laws and regulations overseen by agencies other than USDA that affect the agricultural sector. In 2022, developments in agrofood value chain policies related to the continued economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain vulnerabilities. In the realm of food and nutrition assistance, 2022 saw the continued development of temporary changes to existing food assistance programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the establishment of a new permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program; the implementation of various emergency actions to respond to reduced infant formula availability; and the release of a National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in conjunction with the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

Keywords: Farm policy, ad hoc assistance, disaster assistance, pandemic assistance, commodity programs, conservation, credit, crop insurance, climate, equity, organics, agrofood value chains, food and nutrition assistance

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Saleem Shaik, Erik Dohlman, Utpal Vasavada, and Shida Henneberry of USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS); Sharon Sydow, Rebecca Nemecek, and Cynthia Nickerson of USDA, Office of the Chief Economist; Kate Fitzgerald, David Glasgow, Sara Hernandez, Devon Pattillo, and Adam Sparger of USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service; Jason Carver of USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service; Ashley Chaifetz and Joseph Clift of USDA, Food and Nutrition Service; Joy Harwood, Charles Dodson, Cathie Feather, and Jennifer Fiser of USDA, Farm Production and Conservation Business Center; Richard Elrod and Debora Hamernik of USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Dana Ashford, Gayle Barry, and Nicole Viars of USDA, Natural Resource and Conservation Service; James Barham of USDA, Rural Development; Chris Aulbur, David Zaroni, and Xuan Pham of USDA, Risk Management Agency; Ya-Wei Li, Richard P. Keigwin, Jr., and Sven-Erik Kaiser of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and seven anonymous reviewers for their comments. The authors also thank USDA, ERS staff Grant Wall, Courtney Knauth, and Casey Keel for editorial services, David Marquardt for map design, and Xan Holt of USDA, ERS for layout and design.

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What Is the Issue?

U.S. agricultural policies target an array of policy objectives, such as providing an income safety net for agricultural producers; minimizing negative environmental effects of agricultural production; ensuring that agricultural supply chains are equipped to provide adequate quantities of safe food to consumers; and helping address food and nutrition insecurity. Various tools are used to meet these policy objectives, including cost sharing, direct payments, provision of credit, and access to services. This report examines the major developments in agricultural policies in calendar year 2022, with a focus on policies related to production agriculture, agro-food value chains, and food and nutrition assistance.

What Did the Study Find?

Major developments in agricultural policies in 2022 spanned production agriculture, agrofood value chain, and food and nutrition assistance policy areas. Policy developments targeting production agriculture included the establishment of several new programs and some adjustments to existing programs, such as:

- The launch of the Emergency Livestock Relief Program and the Emergency Relief Program, which are new temporary disaster relief programs.
- The start of temporary assistance programs related to continued effects from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, such as the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program.
- Discretionary changes to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program.
- The introduction of certain discretionary changes and administrative flexibilities for various conservation programs.
- The authorization of \$19.5 billion in new spending until 2031 through the Inflation Reduction Act for certain existing USDA conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program, Conservation Technical Assistance, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, to support the adoption of selected practices with climate mitigation benefits.



ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

- An update of farm loan program regulations to implement 2018 Farm Bill provisions and the authorization of \$3.1 billion in debt relief for distressed borrowers with USDA, Farm Service Agency direct and/or guaranteed loans under Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Updates for certain crop insurance products, amendments of crop insurance reporting regulations, and coverage expansion for some current insurance products.
- The launch of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, which invested more than \$3.1 billion in projects to expand markets for climate-smart commodities and generate greenhouse gas mitigation benefits from climate-smart production.
- The start of a new Bioproduct Pilot Program.
- The beginning of various technical assistance and training programs targeting historically underserved populations.
- Updates to USDA organic regulations and the launch of new programs to support producers who are transitioning to organic operations.
- Developments in other laws and regulations with implications for agriculture, including the passage of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022 and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) release of a new workplan in April 2022 that addresses the agency's obligations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Several initiatives and programs related to the resilience and functionality of agrofood value chains were also introduced in 2022. These included broad initiatives such as the Food System Transformation Framework and the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative, as well as individual programs under the initiatives, such as Regional Food Business Centers and the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program. Other new programs launched in 2022 included the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program, the Cotton and Wool Apparel Program, the Commodity Container Assistance Program, and the Cattle Contracts Library pilot program.

Developments related to food and nutrition assistance included the continued introduction of temporary changes to existing food assistance programs in response to economic effects related to the pandemic, such as administrative flexibilities and temporary increases in benefit levels. In addition, a permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program was created to fill a gap in food assistance availability for children when schools are out of session during the summer months. Several emergency actions were also implemented in response to infant formula supply chain disruptions including allowing Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants to exchange recalled formulas as well as to receive different brands, forms, and sizes of formula than they typically would. Finally, the White House hosted a Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022 to develop a national strategy for ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030.

How Was the Study Conducted?

USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) researchers compiled details on new policies and program initiatives announced or introduced in 2022 related to the U.S. agriculture sector and food supply chain from Federal Register documents; budget documents; program agency websites, fact sheets, handbooks, and implementation documents; and USDA press releases. The authors obtained data for providing context on program trends and recent events from the relevant Federal agency databases, such as the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service's Iowa Production Costs Report; USDA, Farm Service Agency's Emergency Relief Program Dashboard; USDA, Food and Nutrition Service's program data; and USDA, Risk Management Agency's Summary of Business data.

U.S. Agricultural Policy Review, 2022

Introduction

This report is the 2022 edition in the annual series examining developments in U.S. agricultural policies, with a focus on policies related to production agriculture, agrofood value chains, and food and nutrition assistance. A subsection of calendar year 2022's major policy developments are covered in this report including new initiative announcements, new program implementations, and some existing program revisions.

Although most policy changes covered in this report were instituted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), some relate to either new legislation or regulatory developments under the purview of other Federal agencies whose jurisdiction has some implications for the agriculture sector, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, this report does not purport to cover all policy changes instituted by USDA in 2022, as the Department's mandate includes areas outside the scope of food and agriculture, such as forestry and rural development.

Food and agriculture-related policy developments can come about through a variety of mechanisms. Although many changes to U.S. food and agricultural policies in the United States are carried out within the context of new Farm Bill¹ legislation, programs authorized in Farm Bills are rarely implemented in the same year that a Farm Bill is enacted, since programs often require rulemaking, staff education, and outreach before being fully deployed. Nevertheless, other legislative vehicles are sometimes used to authorize new programs related to food and agriculture or to make changes to existing programs. This commonly occurs when Congress acts to provide ad hoc assistance to the food and agriculture sector due to unforeseen events like extreme weather. Finally, agencies at times make discretionary changes to existing programs in response to market conditions or other developments under the authorities granted to them under existing laws.

Policy developments in 2022 that targeted production agriculture spanned different policy areas, including ad hoc assistance, standing farm programs, climate, equity, organics, and other legal and regulatory developments. Policy developments in 2022 related to agrofood value chains included the launch of broad initiatives and individual programs under said initiatives, or addressed specific sectors' resilience or functionality. In 2022, food and nutrition assistance developments included the continued introduction of temporary changes to existing food assistance programs in response to economic effects related to the pandemic, such as administrative flexibilities,² increases in benefit levels, or the ending of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) emergency allotments in some States; the creation of a permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program; the institution of several emergency actions in response to reduced infant formula availability; and the development of a national strategy for ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030 in conjunction with the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

¹ New Farm Bills are typically passed every 5 years. In calendar year 2022, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115–334) was the Farm Bill in force.

² Administrative flexibilities may include changes to program rules and operations that may affect prospective and enrolled program participants, as well as the agencies that administer the programs.

Production Agriculture

Ad Hoc Assistance

Various developments occurred in 2022 related to the provision of ad hoc assistance. These included the launch of new disaster assistance programs, the authorization of new resources for disaster and other ad hoc assistance, and the launch of new pandemic assistance programs under the Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative (table 1).

Table 1
Ad hoc assistance program developments, 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Disaster and other ad hoc assistance		
Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) ^{1, 2}	USDA, FSA	Assistance to livestock producers who experienced loss of forage due to wildfires or drought conditions in 2021 and incurred costs associated with providing supplemental feed
Emergency Relief Program (ERP) ^{1, 3}	USDA, FSA	Assistance to commodity producers who suffered losses due to natural disasters in calendar years 2020 and 2021
Authorization of new resources for temporary assistance ⁴	TBD	Authorization of \$3.745 billion for assistance related to losses for revenue, quality of production for crops, trees, bushes, and vines resulting from natural hazards experienced in calendar year 2022; authorization of up to \$494.5 million in assistance for livestock producers who experienced losses due to drought or wildfire in 2022; authorization of \$250 million for assistance to rice producers who planted a crop in 2022
Pandemic assistance		
Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP) ^{5, 6}	USDA, RMA	An extension of the original program, the program offered crop insurance premium support for eligible insured acres on certain crop insurance policies
Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) ^{7, 8}	USDA, FSA	Assistance to specialty crop operations that incurred eligible on-farm food safety program expenses to obtain or renew a food safety certification in 2022 or 2023

FSA = Farm Service Agency, RMA = Risk Management Agency, TBD = To Be Determined

¹Authorized in the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117-43).

²See 87 FR 19465 for more information.

³See 87 FR 30164 for more information.

⁴Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-328).

⁵Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260).

⁶See 87 FR 7927 for more information.

⁷Authorized by section 5e of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(e)).

⁸See 87 FR 36816 for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

Disaster and Other Ad Hoc Assistance

Two new temporary disaster relief programs were launched in 2022, the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) and the Emergency Relief Program (ERP). Both programs were funded under the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117–43) passed in September 2021, which authorized \$10 billion in new assistance for producers who experienced production losses from disasters that occurred in 2020 and 2021. During this period, the United States experienced 42 different disaster events, which each individually caused economic damages of at least \$1 billion (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information (NOAA, NCEI), 2023).³

In contrast to other supplemental funding for disaster assistance in recent years,⁴ this legislation required that a portion of the appropriation (\$750 million of the \$10 billion) specifically be used to compensate livestock producers for losses incurred in 2021 from drought⁵ or wildfires. ELRP was launched to comply with this provision. In its initial program announcements, USDA indicated that ELRP might be administered in two phases if it deemed a second round of assistance was warranted. ELRP Phase One targeted producers who experienced loss of forage due to wildfires or drought conditions in 2021 and incurred costs associated with providing supplemental feed (USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA), 2022e). To expedite payments, ELRP Phase One was available exclusively to producers who participated in the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) without requiring any additional paperwork from eligible producers and payments were calculated from information previously collected when producers applied for LFP assistance. Final payments were based on 2021 LFP calculated payments, which were multiplied by an ELRP payment percentage.⁶

Although ELRP focused on livestock producers, the remainder of the \$10 billion in assistance appropriated under the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act was designated for crop, tree, bush, and vine losses. USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed ERP to compensate these commodity producers. USDA, FSA announced that ERP would be administered in two phases (USDA, FSA, 2022f). ERP Phase One assisted commodity producers who suffered losses due to natural disasters in calendar years 2020 and 2021. Eligibility for ERP Phase One was determined based on a receipt of an indemnity payment from either a Federal crop insurance policy or from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Payments for ERP Phase One were based on a calculation specific to each

³ The highest costing events were Hurricane Ida, which first affected Louisiana before creating flooding conditions in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey as it moved into the Northeast costing \$80.9 billion in damages; Hurricane Laura struck Louisiana but also affected Texas, Mississippi, and Arkansas (\$26.9 billion); the February 2021 winter storm and cold wave, which primarily affected Texas, but saw effects across 11 other States as well (\$25.9 billion in damages, this is estimated as the costliest U.S. winter storm event on record); the 2020 wildfire season affecting California, Oregon, and Washington (\$19.1 billion); the August 10, 2020, derecho that primarily affected Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, and Ohio (\$12.8 billion); the 2021 wildfire season primarily affecting California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Arizona (\$11.5 billion); the 2021 western drought and heat wave affecting many States in the West (\$9.7 billion). For more information, see National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Environmental Information's *U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters* (2023) report.

⁴ The 2017 Wildfire and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP) program was authorized under the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2018 (Pub. L. 115–123), while the WHIP+ program was authorized under the Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (ASADRA), 2019 (Pub. L. 116–20). Neither piece of legislation included specific provisions for livestock producers. In fact, neither included livestock as a commodity eligible for assistance: BBA authorized assistance for crop, tree, bush, and vine losses, whereas ASADRA expanded that list to also include losses of milk, on-farm stored commodities, crops prevented from planting in 2019, and harvested adulterated wine grapes.

⁵ Eligibility on the basis of drought was determined at the county level. Any county that was subject to severe (D2) drought conditions for 8 consecutive weeks according to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's U.S. Drought Monitor was eligible for assistance. A county was also eligible if extreme drought conditions (D3 or higher) occurred for any amount of time during the year.

⁶ The ELRP payment percentage for Phase One was 75 percent for most producers, whereas producers from historically underserved groups were eligible for a payment percentage of 90 percent.

producer's crop insurance or NAP policy coverage level.⁷ For crops covered under Federal crop insurance, payments were multiplied by an additional payment factor of 75 percent to keep total payments in line with available funding limits. Similar to other recent temporary disaster assistance programs, such as the 2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP) and WHIP+, the ERP Phase One program stipulated that producers who received assistance are required to purchase or maintain crop insurance (with at least a 60-percent coverage level) or NAP coverage (catastrophic level or higher) for the next 2 crop years. For crop producers who are ineligible for Federal crop insurance or NAP, Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) insurance must be purchased at a coverage level of at least 60 percent. ERP Phase Two was not launched by the close of 2022.⁸ As of January 2023, ERP Phase One had disbursed \$7.3 billion of payments (figure 1). A large portion of this total (\$1.16 billion) was disbursed to producers of corn (\$322 million), soybeans (\$309 million), and wheat (\$268 million) in North Dakota (USDA, FSA, 2023). These payments were primarily due to flooding in crop year 2020 and drought in crop year 2021.⁹ Texas also received a significant portion of the total ERP Phase One payments (\$909 million) of which \$510 million went to cotton producers primarily for the effects of adverse weather conditions in the 2020 and 2021 crop years.¹⁰

In December 2022, Congress appropriated new funding for temporary ad hoc assistance in response to conditions in various agricultural sectors in 2022 as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2023 (Pub. L. 117–328). The bulk of this funding—more than \$3.74 billion—is authorized for assisting producers who experience losses in revenue, quality, or production losses of crops,¹¹ trees, bushes, and vines as a consequence of various natural hazards¹² occurring in calendar year 2022. As with the funding for losses from natural hazards occurring in 2020 and 2021 from the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, a portion of the funding for 2022 losses (up to \$494.5 million) was designated for assistance to livestock producers who experienced losses due to drought or wildfires. Elsewhere, the 2023 CAA appropriated \$250 million for assistance to rice producers who planted a crop in 2022.

⁷ Each calculation assigned an “ERP factor” based on the producer's coverage level. Emergency Relief Program (ERP) factors start at 75 percent for both crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program catastrophic coverage and increase as the underlying coverage level of the policy increased (up to a maximum ERP factor of 95 percent).

⁸ On January 11, 2023, USDA, Farm Service Agency and the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation published a Federal Register notice announcing details of ERP Phase Two (see 88 FR 1862). As the program was launched in 2023, it is beyond the scope of this report.

⁹ Among corn, soybean, and wheat producers, 65 percent of crop insurance indemnity payments in 2020 were for excess moisture, precipitation, and rain. For 2021, the majority of indemnities (88 percent) were due to drought (USDA, Risk Management Agency (RMA) 2023).

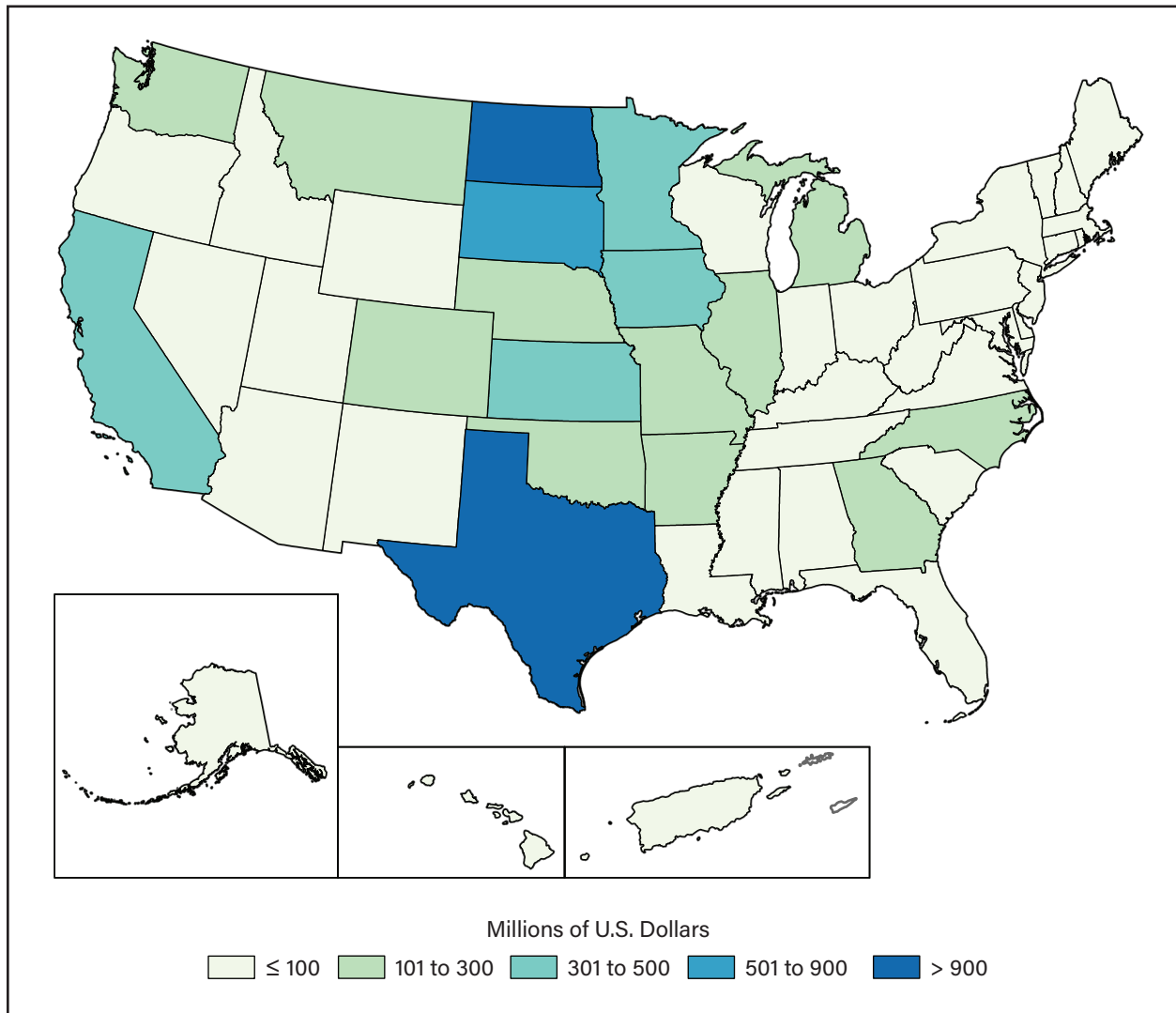
¹⁰ In crop year 2020, 52 percent of crop insurance indemnity payments disbursed to Texas cotton producers were due to drought. For 2021, the most common peril afflicting Texas cotton producers was excess moisture, precipitation, and rain (25 percent of indemnities) (USDA, RMA, 2023).

¹¹ Including milk, on-farm stored commodities, crops prevented from planting in 2022, and harvested adulterated wine grapes.

¹² The legislation specifies the eligible hazards as droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze, including a polar vortex, smoke exposure, and excessive moisture.

Figure 1

Total Emergency Relief Program payments by State, as of January 2023



Note: Figure is based on available data as of January 25, 2023.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using USDA, Farm Service Agency, Emergency Relief Program Dashboard data.

Pandemic Assistance

USDA continued to roll out new temporary programs in 2022 under the umbrella of the 2021 Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative that offered assistance for pandemic-related economic effects. The first of these to be announced was an extension of the Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP). Using funds authorized by the 2021 CAA, the USDA, Risk Management Agency (RMA) first implemented PCCP for the 2021 crop year to help agricultural producers who were financially affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by providing crop insurance premium support (\$5 per acre and no more than premium owed) to eligible producers on insured acres they planted with a qualifying cover crop. In February 2022, USDA, RMA announced that the program would be available for the 2022 crop year as well. Under the 2022 PCCP, premium support (at the same rate offered in 2021 of \$5 per acre and no more than premium

owed) continued to be offered for eligible insured acres on certain crop insurance policies¹³ (USDA, Risk Management Agency (RMA), 2022c).

In contrast to the 2021 PCCP, the 2022 program made premium support available for producers with eligible Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) acres on which a qualifying cover crop was planted. The 2022 program announcement was made prior to the crop year reporting deadline of March 15, 2022. The reporting deadline for 2022 contrasted with the 2021 program, which opened in June 2021 after the typical March 2021 reporting deadline for certain crops, albeit with a special filing window. Given that the 2021 program opened after the reporting deadline, it may not have been claimed by all producers who were eligible. Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa administer a similar program encouraging cover crop plantings by providing a crop insurance premium subsidy¹⁴ under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with USDA, RMA.¹⁵ For the States with an active MOU, insured acres that qualified for a premium subsidy under their State program were also eligible for a matching premium subsidy amount under PCCP.

USDA announced the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) Program in June 2022. Specialty crop value chains were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, foodservice outlet demand was substantially reduced, which—in some cases—forced specialty crop producers to seek alternative markets for their products (Davis & Lucier, 2021; Goodrich et al., 2021). Accessing new marketing channels resulted in new costs on specialty crop producers by requiring them to achieve new food safety certifications or undergo food safety audits. In response, USDA, FSA announced \$200 million in assistance through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act via FSCSC. Under FSCSC, specialty crop operations could get assistance for obtaining or renewing food safety certifications for 2022 or 2023 by helping to cover the increased costs of complying with regulatory and market-driven food safety requirements, including costs related to developing an initial food safety plan, maintaining or updating an existing food safety plan, food safety certification, certification upload fees, microbiological testing, and training (USDA, FSA, 2022h). The payment rate for most eligible expenses under the program was set at 75 percent of eligible costs for producers belonging to a historically underserved group¹⁶ and 50 percent for all other applicants, with maximum payment ceilings that were dependent on the specific expense. For training, the payment rate was set at 100 percent of eligible expenses for the operation, up to a maximum of \$300 for producers belonging to historically underserved groups and \$200 for all other applicants. Specialty crop operations who obtained their food safety certification through a group model under a food safety management system were eligible to apply to be reimbursed for their share of eligible expenses paid by the group, in addition to any eligible expenses incurred individually.

Standing Farm Programs

Policy developments in standing farm programs were related to certain commodity, conservation, and credit programs in 2022. There were also various changes to the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) (table 2).

¹³ Supplemental Coverage Option, Enhanced Coverage Option, Post-Application Coverage Endorsement, and Hurricane Insurance Protection—Wind Index policies or endorsements were not eligible for Pandemic Cover Crop Program. However, Stacked Income Protection Plan and Margin Protection policies were eligible for PCCP when insured as a standalone policy, but not as endorsements to underlying Yield Protection, Revenue Protection (RP), or RP with the Harvest Price Exclusion policy.

¹⁴ These crop insurance premium subsidies are distinct from State- or national-level programs oriented towards “cost-sharing” for new cover cropping or enhancements.

¹⁵ As authorized by Section 508I (8) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act.

¹⁶ USDA defines four groups as “historically underserved,” including farmers or ranchers who are beginning; socially disadvantaged; veterans; and/or limited resource. For more information, see USDA, Farm Production and Conservation, *Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers* (2022).

Table 2

Developments in standing farm programs in 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Commodity programs		
Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) ¹	USDA, FSA	Program amended to provide assistance for the additional costs of transporting livestock to feed in areas where grazing and hay resources were depleted. Eligibility was also expanded in 2022 by amending the definition for “eligible drought” to include any area of a county rated by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 intensity for at least 8 consecutive weeks
Conservation		
New resources for existing conservation programs ²	USDA, NRCS	Authorization of \$19.5 billion in new funding over 9 years, including \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for Regional Conservation Partnership Program, \$3.25 billion for CSP, \$1.4 billion for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and \$1 billion for Conservation Technical Assistance
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ³	USDA, NRCS	New \$38 million funding for EQIP cover crop initiative launched; EQIP Conservation Incentive Contract option authorized nationwide
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) ⁴	USDA, NRCS	Updated rules for CSP to allow producers to re-enroll in the program following an unfunded application to renew an existing contract
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ⁵	USDA, FSA	Administrative flexibilities authorized allowing producers in the final year of a CRP contract to request to voluntarily terminate their contract early without having to repay rental payments
Credit		
USDA, FSA farm loan programs ⁶	USDA, FSA	Update of farm loan programs in line with rules outlined in 2018 Farm Bill, including modifying the 3-year experience requirement, raising loan limits, and raising guarantee limits for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers
Debt relief for distressed borrowers ²	USDA, FSA	Authorization of \$3.1 billion in debt relief for distressed borrowers with USDA, FSA direct and/or guaranteed loans
Update of certain livestock insurance policies ⁷	USDA, RMA	Updated Dairy Revenue Protection, Livestock Gross Margin, and Livestock Risk Protection policies
Crop insurance reporting and other changes ⁸	USDA, RMA	Provided alternative reporting options, clarified the good farming practice appeal deadline, and updated terminology
Expanded double cropping coverage ⁹	USDA, RMA	Expanded coverage offered for the 2023 crop year for spring planted soybeans or grain sorghum following the harvest of another crop
Small Grains Crop Provision expansion ¹⁰	USDA, RMA	Offer revenue protection for spring oats for the 2023 crop year and winter oats and rye for the 2024 crop year
Post-Application Coverage Endorsement (PACE) ¹¹	USDA, RMA	Expanded the geographic availability of PACE for producers of nonirrigated corn who “split-apply” nitrogen to include most counties in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin where nonirrigated corn is insurable

FSA = Farm Service Agency. NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service. RMA = Risk Management Agency.

¹See 87 FR 19783 for more information.

²Authorized in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117-169).

³See the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Conservation Incentive Contracts Fact Sheet on the USDA, NRCS website for more information.

⁴See USDA, NRCS National Bulletin NB-300-22-20 for more information.

⁵See USDA, FSA Notice CRP-970 for more information.

⁶See 87 FR 13117 for more information.

⁷See the USDA, RMA website for more information.

⁸See 87 FR 38883 for more information.

⁹See Double Cropping Initiative on the USDA, RMA website for more information.

¹⁰See 87 FR 72359 for more information.

¹¹See Post Application Coverage Endorsement Fact Sheet on the USDA, RMA website for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

Commodity Programs

Several discretionary changes were made to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) in 2022. Broadly, ELAP provides assistance to producers of livestock, honey bees, and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease and certain adverse weather events when those losses are not covered by other disaster assistance programs. While ELAP already provided assistance to cover the cost of hauling water to livestock during drought, the program was expanded in 2021 to also provide assistance for the additional costs of transporting feed to animals due to a qualifying drought. This program adjustment evolved in 2022 when the program was updated to also cover the costs of transporting livestock to feed when the livestock are intended for grazing. This provision was applied retroactively. Producers were eligible for feed or livestock transportation cost assistance for costs that were incurred for additional mileage above normal on or after January 1, 2021 (USDA, Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) 2022). In addition, USDA, FSA expanded ELAP eligibility in 2022 by amending the definition for “eligible drought” to include any area of a county rated by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s U.S. Drought Monitor as having D2 intensity for at least 8 consecutive weeks for the specific type of eligible grazing land or pastureland for the county. Previously, a drought rating of D3 or higher was required to qualify as “eligible drought.” This revision not only expanded assistance availability but is also consistent with the drought rating applicable to the Livestock Forage Program (LFP). The final ELAP program adjustment for 2022 removed the restriction on providing water transport assistance for livestock located on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Conservation

There were large changes to Federal investments in USDA conservation programs in 2022 as well as new initiatives and discretionary changes to some existing programs. On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (Pub. L. 117–169) into law. Among its provisions, the Act included approximately \$19.5 billion in new spending available until 2031. The new spending was designated for existing USDA conservation programs to support producers in adopting practices with climate mitigation benefits, including enhancements to improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide. The IRA includes \$8.45 billion in new funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), \$4.95 billion for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), \$3.25 billion for Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), \$1.4 billion to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and \$1 billion for the Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA). These conservation programs are often oversubscribed, as they receive more applications than can be funded with available resources.¹⁷ Accordingly, this additional investment will allow more producers to implement, expand, and continue conservation practices, including those that support greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction and carbon sequestration (USDA, n.d.).

Beyond the IRA, there were several discretionary changes to conservation programs in 2022, including to EQIP, CRP, and CSP. First, a new cover crop initiative was launched under EQIP in January 2022. The initiative designated \$38 million to support the adoption of cover crops to facilitate climate change mitigation and other environmental benefits in 11 States¹⁸ with a demonstrated demand for additional support of the practice. In addition to the cover crop initiative, the EQIP Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) option became available nationwide in 2022. The CICs help producers address priority resource concerns in high-

¹⁷ For example, one 2021 analysis of USDA contract data reported that between 2010 and 2020, only 31 percent of farmers who applied to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and just 42 percent who applied to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) were awarded contracts. Furthermore, the share of funded applications generally declined over the period—in 2020, only 27 percent of EQIP applications and 25 percent of CSP applicants were awarded contracts (Happ, 2021).

¹⁸ These States are Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and South Dakota.

priority areas through 5-year contracts that include implementation payments for new conservation practices, annual payments to maintain conservation efforts, and evaluation and monitoring activities to report practice outcomes (USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 2022). The CICs were first authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill and piloted in fiscal year 2021 in four States before the 2022 nationwide rollout. Finally, USDA updated rules for CSP to allow producers to re-enroll in the program following an unfunded application to renew an existing contract. Previously, if CSP participants did not re-enroll the year when their contract expired, then they would be ineligible for re-enrollment for 2 years. Because CSP provides support for ongoing conservation efforts, the extension of re-enrollment eligibility will help producers to continuously employ conservation practices.

USDA also introduced certain administrative flexibilities to various conservation programs in May. These flexibilities included allowing producers in the final year of a CRP contract to request voluntary early termination of their contract (that is, at the end of the primary nesting season¹⁹ for fiscal year 2022) without having to repay rental payments, which could potentially allow producers to plant a fall-seeded crop on that land for crop year 2023, or to open the land for haying or grazing (USDA, FSA, 2022i). In addition, USDA announced that it would allow producers with cover cropping in their existing EQIP or CSP contracts to either modify their cover crop plans to instead shift to a conservation crop rotation, or to delay their planting of the cover crop by 1 year without requiring that the current contract be terminated, allowing producers to plant a crop for harvest that year.

Credit

The USDA, FSA offers direct and guaranteed loans to farmers who are unable to access credit elsewhere. In March 2022, USDA, FSA announced an update to farm loan program regulations to implement provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill (USDA, FSA, 2022a). Among the announced program changes, USDA, FSA modified the existing 3-year experience requirement to allow additional flexibility to meet the farming experience requirement.²⁰ In addition, loan limits for direct and guaranteed Farm Ownership and Operating Loans were raised to levels specified in the 2018 Farm Bill and guarantee limits for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers were raised from 90 percent to 95 percent of the total loan amount. Other changes included expanded benefits for veterans, equitable relief to eligible borrowers, emergency loans for borrowers who have restructured loans, and expanded Certified Mediation program coverage.

In addition to changes implemented by USDA, FSA, Section 22006 of the IRA signed into law in August 2022 included \$3.1 billion in debt relief for distressed borrowers with USDA, FSA direct and/or guaranteed loans to keep borrowers in the farming business (USDA, FSA, 2022c). Under this authority, USDA distributed nearly \$600 million in payments to borrowers who were 60 days or more delinquent on their USDA, FSA loans to bring the loans current and cover the next annual payment. An additional \$200 million in payments were also made to borrowers who had liquidated their collateral but still had remaining debt. USDA is also examining options for borrowers who are facing bankruptcy, foreclosure, or other complex financial challenges.

¹⁹ Primary nesting season is defined in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 1410.2 (7 CFR 1410.2) as "...the nesting season for birds in the local area that are economically significant, in significant decline, or conserved in accordance with Federal or State law, as determined by CCC in consultation with the State technical committee..."

²⁰ Existing regulations require applicants to have participated in the business operations of a farm for at least 3 out of the 10 years prior to the date the application was submitted. However, 1 of these 3 years can be substituted with postsecondary education in agriculture business, horticulture, animal science, agronomy, or other agricultural related fields; significant business management experience; or leadership or management experience while serving in any branch of the military. The revisions expand the list of acceptable experiences, and also allow those experiences to substitute for up to 2 of the 3 years. For more information, see 87 FR 13117.

Crop Insurance

Changes to the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) in 2022 included updating certain crop insurance products, amending crop insurance reporting regulations, and expanding coverage for some current insurance products. In May, the USDA, Risk Management Agency (RMA) updated certain livestock insurance policies—Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP), Livestock Gross Margin (LGM), and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP)—to offer producers greater flexibility to manage risk in their operations. These updates included allowing producers to use indemnities to pay premiums; permitting producers to carry both LGM and LRP policies (although overlapping coverage, such as insuring the same livestock under multiple policies, is not allowed); expanding coverage for LGM to all counties in all 50 States; permitting more flexible location reporting for LRP; shortening the indemnity payment window for insurance companies for LRP from 60 days to 30 days; and increasing head limits for certain species under LRP (USDA, RMA, 2022g).

In June, USDA, RMA amended its regulations to provide alternative production reporting options, clarify the good farming practice appeal deadline, and update terminology to be consistent across policies (USDA, RMA, 2022a). The new rule amended acceptable production records provisions in various crop insurance policies, making it easier for producers who do not have disinterested third-party records to provide the required supporting records to obtain insurance, report their annual production, and file a claim. The changes to the crop insurance policies resulting from the amendments are applicable for the 2023 and succeeding crop years for crops with a contract change date on or after June 30, 2022. For all other crops, the changes to the policies made in this rule are applicable for the 2024 and succeeding crop years.

In July, as part of a broader set of measures²¹ related to rising food prices, the USDA, RMA announced expanded double cropping coverage availability for the 2023 crop year (USDA, RMA, n.d.). These efforts expanded coverage options for agricultural producers with certain double-cropping rotations—specifically, spring-planted soybeans or grain sorghum following the harvest of another crop such as winter wheat. The USDA, RMA announced that the coverage would be available in more than 1,500 counties for the 2023 crop year.²²

Aside from these changes in crop insurance rules, USDA also expanded crop insurance options in 2022 to improve the availability of risk management tools for producers. Specifically, the USDA, RMA expanded the Small Grains Crop Provision to offer revenue protection for spring oats for the 2023 crop year and winter oats and rye for the 2024 crop year (USDA, RMA, 2022f); amended the provisions for processing sweet corn crop insurance, cabbage crop insurance, and fresh market tomato crop insurance (USDA, RMA, 2022d); and expanded the geographic availability of the Post-Application Coverage Endorsement (PACE) option for producers of nonirrigated corn who “split-apply”²³ nitrogen to include most counties in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin where nonirrigated corn is insurable²⁴ (USDA, RMA, 2022e).

²¹ These included increasing technical assistance for precision agriculture, nutrient management tools, and increased funding for fertilizer manufacturing and processing. For more information, see The White House, *Fact Sheet: President Biden Announces New Actions to Address Putin’s Price Hike, Make Food More Affordable, and Lower Costs for Farmers* (2022b).

²² Maps of the affected counties are available on the USDA, Risk Management Agency’s “Double Cropping Initiative” website.

²³ “Split applying” nitrogen is a practice involving multiple smaller nitrogen applications, which can reduce runoff or the leaching of nutrients into waterways and groundwater.

²⁴ The Post-Application Coverage Endorsement was rolled out in 2021, initially offering coverage only in select counties of Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota.

Climate

There were several policy developments in 2022 related to climate and greenhouse gas emissions in U.S. agriculture (table 3).

Table 3
Climate-related policy developments in 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities initiative ^{1, 2}	USDA, NRCS	\$3.1 billion in investments for more than 141 projects to expand markets for climate-smart commodities generating greenhouse gas mitigation benefits from climate-smart production
Bioproduct Pilot Program (BPP) ^{3, 4}	USDA, NIFA	Competitive grant program to advance the development of cost-competitive bioproducts with environmental benefits compared with incumbent products
New resources for existing conservation programs ⁵	USDA, NRCS	Authorization of \$19.5 billion in new funding over 9 years, including \$8.45 billion for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), \$4.95 billion for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), \$3.25 billion for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), \$1.4 billion for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and \$1 billion for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Funding to mitigate the effects of drought ⁵	U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation	\$4 billion in grants, contracts, or financial assistance agreements available through fiscal year 2026 to help mitigate the effects of drought in western States
Passage of a version of the Growing Climate Solutions Act (GCSA) ⁶	TBD	Directs USDA to conduct a report on the state of the voluntary environmental credit market, establish a voluntary Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Program, and establish an advisory council to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the program
Passage of a version of the Sponsoring USDA Sustainability Targets in Agriculture to Incentivize Natural Solutions (SUSTAINS) Act ⁶	TBD	Authorizes the acceptance and use of private funding to be used for addressing certain climate and natural resource priorities under covered USDA programs

NIFA = National Institute of Food and Agriculture. NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service. TBD = To Be Determined.

¹Authorized by the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714–714f).

²See the *Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities* landing page on the USDA website.

³Authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117–58).

⁴See Funding Opportunity USDA-NIFA-BPP-009262 for more information.

⁵Authorized in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (Pub. L. 117–169).

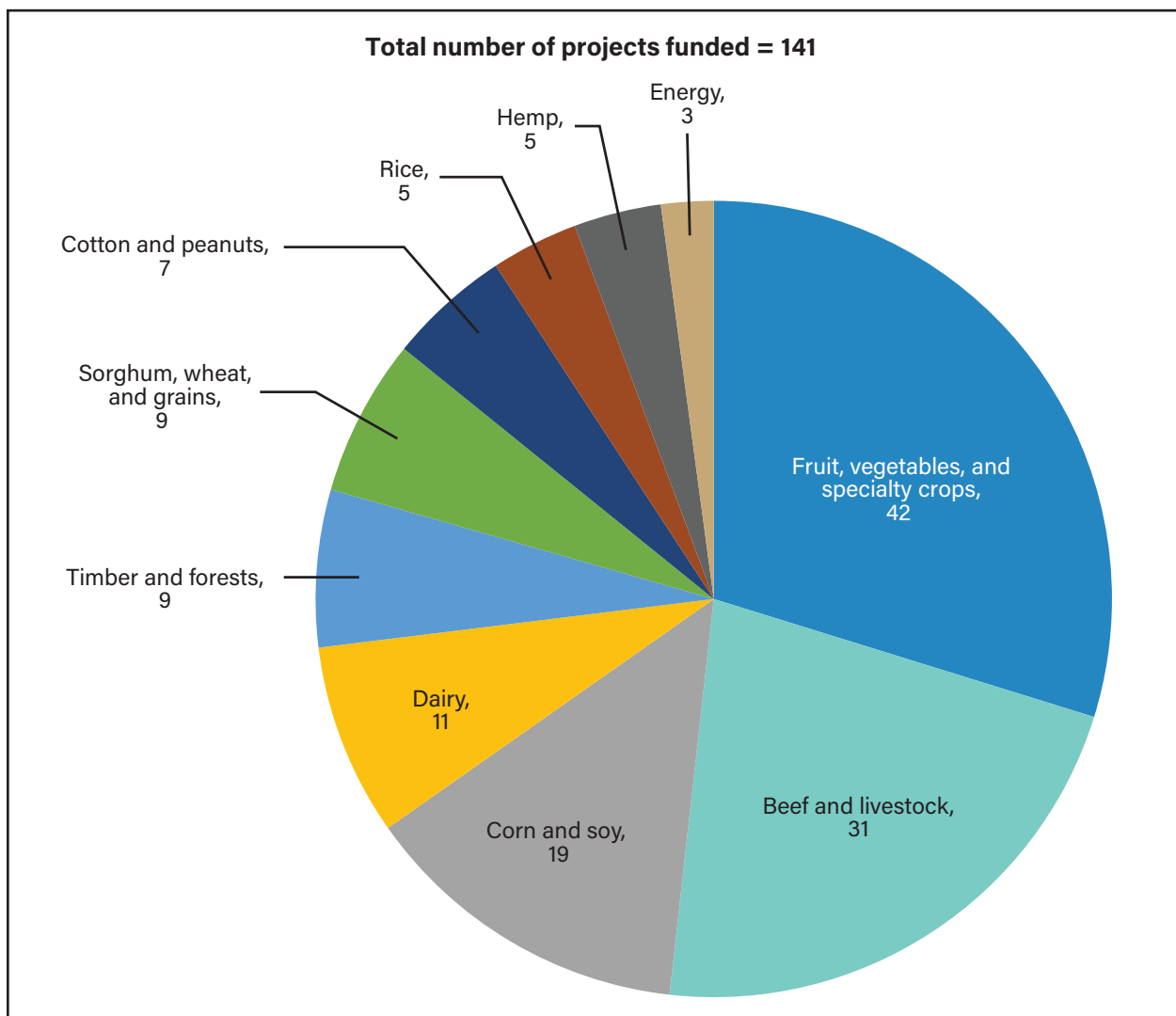
⁶Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2023 (Pub. L. 117–328).

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

The USDA launched the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities initiative in 2022, which is comprised of more than \$3.1 billion in investments for more than 141 projects intended to expand markets for climate-smart commodities generating greenhouse gas mitigation benefits from climate-smart production. Funding for the pilot projects is distributed to partners through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Projects may provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on a voluntary basis on working lands; pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, moni-

toring, reporting, and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities (USDA, 2022d). Approved pilot projects will last 1–5 years. Applications were solicited in two separate funding pools. Large-scale projects from \$5 million to \$100 million were the target of the first announced pool, with awards for \$2.8 billion for 70 projects announced on September 14. Awards for the second funding pool were announced on December 12, and comprised of 71 projects totaling \$325 million. The second pool was designated for smaller projects requesting from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999, and targeted small and/or underserved producers, and investments in measuring, monitoring, reporting, and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions. In total, these projects involved more than 60,000 farmers and encompassed more than 25 million acres of working lands, and will result in an estimated 60 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent sequestered over the lives of the projects (USDA, 2022d). Although the approved proposals cover a variety of projects, a majority are concentrated in two commodity categories: “fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops” and “beef and livestock” (figure 2).

Figure 2
Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities projects funded, by commodity



Numbers after commodity = numbers of projects funded.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using USDA, Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities: By the Numbers Infographic.

Beyond the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, there were several other policy developments with respect to climate and production agriculture in 2022. First, in June, USDA announced the launch of the new Bioproduct Pilot Program (BPP). The program—authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 (Pub. L. 117–58)—is a competitive grant program seeking to advance the development of cost-competitive bioproducts with environmental benefits compared with incumbent products²⁵ (USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), 2022c). The program seeks projects that will study the benefits of using materials derived from covered agricultural commodities²⁶ for the production of construction and consumer products. The program will fund grants of \$2 million to \$5 million, with \$5 million in total funding available in fiscal year 2022 and an additional \$5 million available in fiscal year 2023.

Additional funding for climate initiatives was also part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which was signed into law in August. Aside from the new investments in standing conservation programs (see above “Conservation” section), the IRA also included new funding for drought response and preparedness. Specifically, the legislation authorized \$4 billion in grants, contracts, or financial assistance agreements available through fiscal year 2026 to help mitigate the impact of drought in western States,²⁷ to be administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation. The legislation gives priority to the Colorado River Basin and other basins experiencing comparable levels of long-term drought. For the Colorado River Basin in particular, agriculture is the source of most water withdrawals (Maupin et al., 2018), such that these efforts may have important implications for western agriculture.

Signed into law on December 29, 2022, the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) contained several provisions related to climate and agriculture. The Act included a revised version of the Growing Climate Solutions Act (GCSA), which directs USDA to carry out three broad activities related to environmental credit markets. First, USDA must conduct an initial report on the state of the voluntary environmental credit market, including supply and demand of credits, the state of technology, barriers to participation, and potential roles for USDA.²⁸ Second, USDA must establish a voluntary Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Program if the Secretary of Agriculture determines that doing so will facilitate the participation of farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners in voluntary environmental credit markets. In establishing this program, the Act directs USDA to:

- Evaluate and publish a list of protocols and qualifications for voluntary agriculture or forestry carbon credit markets;
- Determine qualifications for private sector entities to register under the new program;
- Provide a process for registration of private-sector entities under the program to either provide technical assistance to producers interested in environmental markets, or to verify protocol processes; and
- Provide information for producers on participating in voluntary environmental credit markets.

²⁵ For example, an incumbent product such as consumer plastics could be substituted by biodegradable bioplastics.

²⁶ For the purposes of the program, covered agricultural commodities include any agricultural commodity, food, feed, fiber, livestock, oil, or a derivative thereof, that the Secretary determines to have been used in the production of materials that have demonstrated market viability and benefits as of the date of enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. For purposes of clarity, forest and crop residues and agricultural/food byproducts or wastes are considered “Covered Agricultural Commodities.” For more information, see USDA, NIFA’s *Request for Applications: Bioproduct Pilot Program* (2022c).

²⁷ See Title V, Subtitle B, Part 3, Sec. 50233.

²⁸ The Act also directs USDA to carry out a similar assessment every 4 years after the initial report.

Finally, the Act directs USDA to establish an advisory council to advise the Secretary on the Program. The 2023 CAA appropriated \$4.1 million for these activities to be spent over fiscal years 2023–2027, with an additional \$1 million authorized annually in each fiscal year from 2023 to 2027.

The 2023 CAA also included a revised version of the Sponsoring USDA Sustainability Targets in Agriculture to Incentivize Natural Solutions (SUSTAINS) Act. This provision allows USDA to accept and use private funding for public-private partnerships for a range of covered programs. This private funding can be used for purposes of addressing climate change, sequestering carbon, improving wildlife habitat, protecting sources of drinking water, or addressing other natural resource priorities. Furthermore, entities contributing funds may designate certain aspects of how their funding can be used, including for which program, in which geographic area, and for which natural resource concern. The provision also authorizes the Department to match private donations, subject to funding availability.

Equity

In line with wider administration actions, USDA continued introducing new measures aimed at improving equity in 2022 (table 4).

Table 4
Policy developments related to equity in 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
USDA Justice40 programs ¹	USDA	Announcement of USDA programs that would be covered under the whole-of-government Justice40 initiative
Equity Action Plan ²	USDA	Release of Equity Action Plan detailing measures USDA will take to integrate equity and civil rights into policy and program design
Equity Commission ^{3, 4}	USDA	Inaugural meeting of the Commission held
Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements ⁵	USDA, NRCS	\$50 million investment in new agreements to enhance outreach in collaboration with partners to expand the delivery of conservation assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers to support activities that introduce the concepts of climate-smart agriculture and to assist producers with planning and implementation of conservation practices and principles
American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment Program ^{6, 7}	USDA, NIFA	A minimum of \$25 million to fund cooperative agreements for the delivery of technical assistance to support underserved groups in accessing USDA programs
Increasing Land, Capital and Market Access Program ^{6, 8}	USDA, FSA	Up to \$300 million in cooperative agreements for projects that help producers strengthen access to land
Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals program ^{6, 9}	USDA, NIFA	Up to \$250 million to eligible educational institutions to support and prepare students for careers in the food, agriculture, natural resource, and human science fields

FSA = Farm Service Agency. NIFA = National Institute of Food and Agriculture. NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service.

¹See Justice40 Covered Programs List on the USDA website for more information.

²See *USDA Equity Action Plan* on the USDA website for more information.

³Authorized in the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (Public Law (Pub. L.) 117–2).

⁴See the USDA Equity Commission website for more information.

⁵See Funding Opportunity USDA-NRCS-NHQ-REJ-21-NOFO0001121 for more information.

⁶Authorized by Section 1006 the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 117–2), as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub. L. 117–169).

⁷See Funding Opportunity USDA-NIFA-OP-009004 for more information.

⁸See *Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program* Fact Sheet on the USDA website for more information.

⁹See Funding Opportunity USDA-NIFA-ARPAED-009362 for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

In June 2022, Secretary Vilsack announced the list of USDA programs that would be covered under the Justice40 initiative—a whole-of-government effort which aims to ensure that 40 percent of the benefits of certain²⁹ Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities (The White House, 2022c). Covered USDA programs include farm safety net programs such as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC); conservation programs such as ACEP, CRP, CSP and EQIP; research and knowledge generation programs such as the USDA Climate Hubs; and outreach and education programs such as Risk Management Education, and extension programs benefitting underserved communities (USDA, 2022c). For each program, agencies were directed to establish a methodology for calculating the benefits accruing to disadvantaged communities and develop a plan to maximize benefits to disadvantaged groups.

At the departmental level, in April, USDA publicly released the department's Equity Action Plan, which detailed certain measures that USDA will take over the coming years to integrate equity and civil rights into policy and program design (USDA, 2022e). Specifically, the plan highlighted seven high-impact actions: partner with trusted technical assistance providers; reduce barriers to USDA programs and improve support to underserved farmers, ranchers, and landowners; expand equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs; increase USDA infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities; advance equity in Federal procurement; uphold Federal Trust and Treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes; and an unwavering commitment to civil rights. In each of these areas, the plan lays out current barriers to equitable outcomes, actions and intended effects on said barriers, anticipated timelines for achieving target actions, and primary agency responsibilities.

One of the pillars of USDA's approach to advancing equity highlighted in the Equity Action Plan is the establishment of an Equity Commission comprised of external stakeholders. This Commission was authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARPA) (Pub. L. 117–2), which mandated the establishment of an equity commission to “address racial equity issues within the Department of Agriculture and its programs.” On February 28, 2022, the Equity Commission and its Agriculture Subcommittee held its inaugural meeting and a subcommittee on Rural Community Economic Development was subsequently formed in August 2022 (USDA, 2022a). In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463), the Equity Commission will carry out its work for 2 years unless its charter is renewed.

Outside of Department-wide initiatives, several equity-focused programs were launched in 2022. In January 2022, USDA announced that it would invest \$50 million in new Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements, to be administered by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These agreements are intended to enhance the capacity of USDA, NRCS and partner organizations to assist underserved producers in implementing certain natural resource conservation practices (such as improving soil health and water quality or providing habitat for at-risk wildlife), with approved projects identifying and removing barriers to accessing information and programs, and reaching underserved populations through outreach and technical assistance (USDA, NRCS, 2021). Through this opportunity, 117 2-year partnerships were funded in fiscal year 2022.

Subsequently, in March 2022, USDA announced the launch of the American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment Program (ARPTAI). Authorized under Section 1006 of ARPA and administered by the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), ARPTAI will offer a minimum of \$25 million in awards ranging from \$500,000 to \$3.5 million to fund 5-year cooperative agreements with nonprofits or institutions of higher education for the delivery of outreach and technical assistance to support

²⁹ Investments covered under the initiative include those related to climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure.

underserved groups (including socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, producers with limited resources, and veterans) in accessing USDA programs and services (USDA, NIFA, 2022b).

Two additional programs funded and authorized by ARPA Section 1006³⁰ were launched in 2022. The first, the Increasing Land, Capital and Market Access Program, targets increasing access to farm ownership opportunities for underserved producers. Administered through USDA, FSA, the program funds cooperative agreements for projects to help producers strengthen access to land by either addressing capital or market concerns (USDA, FSA, 2022b). The program made available up to \$300 million to fund projects across four tiers by size and locale—large, national land access; mid-sized, national; regional; and local, State, territory, county, and community. The amount of funding available per project ranges from \$250,000 to \$40 million.

The second program, From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals (NEXTGEN), is administered by USDA, NIFA, and makes up to \$250 million available to eligible institutions (including 1890 institutions, 1994 institutions, Alaska Native-serving and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, and insular area institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories) to support and prepare students for careers in the food, agriculture, natural resource, and human sciences fields (USDA, NIFA, 2022a). NEXTGEN places a particular emphasis on preparing scholars for Federal Government employment to lessen diversity gaps in those fields. Grant awards range between \$500,000 and \$20 million and institutions may use the funding to support various activities, including scholarships, paid internships, fellowships, job matching, or programs to learn about training and employment in the Federal sector, with an emphasis on USDA.

Organics

Policy developments related to organics in 2022 included the publishing of a new organic origin of livestock rule, the introduction of the Organic Transition Initiative, and the launch of the Transition to Organic Partnership Program and the Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (table 5).

Table 5
Organics-related policy developments, 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Organic Origin of Livestock ¹	USDA, AMS	Clarifies the requirements for how and when dairy animals may be transitioned into organic production
Organic Transition Initiative (OTI) ²	USDA, AMS, USDA, NRCS, and USDA, RMA	Support for farmers transitioning to organic production, including through increased technical assistance, market development, and financial support
Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) ³	USDA, AMS	Includes workshops and field days connecting transitioning farmers with mentors, and engagement with extension institutions
Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (TOGA) ^{4, 5}	USDA, RMA	Provides up to \$25 million to support participation of transitioning and certified organic producers in crop insurance by covering a portion of their insurance premium

AMS = Agricultural Marketing Service. NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service. RMA = Risk Management Agency.

¹See 87 FR 19740 for more information.

²See the *Organic Transition Initiative* Fact Sheet on the USDA website for more information.

³See the *Transition to Organic Partnership Program* landing page on the USDA, AMS website.

⁴Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2021 (Public Law 116-260).

⁵See 87 FR 51960 for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

³⁰ As amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117-169).

In April, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP) published the Origin of Livestock (OOL) final rule for organic dairy animals, clarifying the requirements for how and when dairy animals may be transitioned into organic production (USDA, AMS, 2022c). The rule updates the previous regulation for organic-certified dairy animals to address inconsistencies in implementation of OOL requirements found by the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) (USDA, OIG, 2013). Organic milk and milk products must be obtained from animals that have been under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation onward. However, OOL allows for exemptions for operations transitioning herds, stating that once an "entire, distinct herd" has been transitioned to organic production, all dairy animals must be managed organically. OIG found that the previous rule allowed for varying interpretation by organic certifying agents as to the definition of an "entire, distinct herd." Some certifying agents enforced the term as all animals in a given operation, but others allowed multiple groups in each operation to be considered distinct herds. This led to some certifying agents allowing dairy operators to use this exemption to continually transition nonorganic dairy animals into organic production by classifying the group of dairy animals as a "distinct" herd.

Under the final OOL rule, a nonorganic dairy operation may transition to organic production one time, with all animals ending their transition at the same time after a 12-month period of organic management. Once the operation has transitioned the dairy animals, that operation cannot transition additional animals or source transitioned animals. Any dairy animal added thereafter must have been organically managed from the last third of gestation (i.e., about 3 months before birth for dairy cattle). The rule took effect on June 6, 2022, and all operations were required to comply with its provisions by April 5, 2023.

In August, USDA launched a new Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)—a \$300-million, multi-agency effort to support farmers transitioning to organics and strengthen organic markets. This initiative offers support for farmers transitioning to organic production, including increased technical assistance, market development, and financial support (USDA, AMS, 2022d). Programs developed under the initiative aim to increase the number of operations transitioning to organic agricultural systems to meet growing consumer demand.

As part of OTI, USDA, AMS launched the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) in 2022 (USDA, AMS, 2022e). The program's resources will include workshops and field days, connecting transitioning farmers with mentors, and engagement with extension institutions. Also under the umbrella of OTI, USDA, RMA launched the Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program (TOGA) in August. TOGA will provide up to \$25 million to support participation of transitioning and certified organic producers in crop insurance by covering a portion of their insurance premium (USDA, RMA, 2022b).

Developments in Other Laws and Regulations With Implications for Agriculture

While most policies and programs relevant to production agriculture are administered by USDA, in some instances, the sector can be substantially affected by laws and regulations overseen by other agencies. This was the case for two policy developments in 2022 (table 6).

Table 6

Developments in other laws and regulations with implications for agriculture, 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022 (PRIA 5) ^{1, 2}	EPA	Passage of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022
Workplan outlining EPA obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) ³	EPA	Release of a new workplan addressing how EPA will meet its obligations under ESA to ensure that when a pesticide is registered it does not jeopardize listed threatened or endangered species or adversely modify their critical habitats

EPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

¹Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2023 (Public Law 117-328).

²See *Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022* (PRIA 5) on the EPA website for more information.

³See *EPA's Workplan and Progress Toward Better Protections for Endangered Species* on the EPA website for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

The first was the passage of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022 (designated PRIA 5, as this Act is the fifth iteration of the PRIA), signed into law in December as part of the 2023 CAA (EPA, 2023b). Originally established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, PRIA 1 put a new system of registering pesticides in place by creating a registration service fee system for applications and mandating that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) make a determination on applications within specified time frames (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2022c). The legislation has since been reauthorized roughly every 5 years, with subsequent iterations adjusting EPA's pesticide registration system processes. Among other provisions, PRIA 5 increased pesticide registration fees, extended the statutory deadline for the EPA to conclude its initial registration review of each covered pesticide to October 2026, and required manufacturers to include bilingual labels or a link to a translation on products within 3–8 years, depending on the use classification and relative toxicity of the pesticide.

The EPA also released a new workplan in April 2022 addressing the agency's obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to ensure that when a pesticide is registered, it does "not jeopardize the continued existence of federally threatened or endangered (listed) species or modify their designated critical habitats," (EPA, 2023a). Prior to the drafting of the workplan, EPA was estimated to meet this obligation for less than 5 percent of pesticide actions (EPA, 2022a). This new workplan outlines four strategies and related actions to protect ESA species and their habitats to an extent that fulfills EPA obligations under Federal law while minimizing effects to pesticide users:

- Meeting ESA obligations for all Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) actions that invoke ESA;
- Improving approaches to identifying and requiring ESA protections;
- Improving the efficiency and timeliness of the ESA consultation process in coordination with other Federal agencies; and
- Improving stakeholder engagement in order to better understand their pest control practices and implement specific protection measures.

The workplan is intended as a living document to be periodically revisited to incorporate lessons learned. In that vein, EPA subsequently released a workplan update in November 2022 outlining steps to be taken to better protect listed and other nontarget species (EPA, 2022b).

Agrofood Policies

Broadly, agrofood policy developments in 2022 related to improving the resilience, functionality, and sustainability of agricultural supply chains (table 7). These efforts can largely be characterized as either general food systemwide efforts or initiatives addressing issues in particular supply chains.

Table 7
Agrofood policy developments, 2022

Initiative	Administering agency	Description
Food systemwide initiatives		
Food System Transformation framework ¹	USDA	Launch of a framework to strengthen the food system at all steps of the supply chain, including a variety of existing and new programs
Regional Food Business Centers ^{2, 3}	USDA, AMS	Creation of at least six Regional Food Business Centers and one national Tribal Food Business Center to support a resilient, diverse, and competitive food system
Initiatives focused on particular supply chains		
Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative ⁴	USDA	Launch of new initiative to improve meat and poultry processing infrastructure and ensure more competitive meat processing markets
Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) ^{5, 6}	USDA, RD	\$150 million in grants for meat and poultry processing facility start-up or expansion
Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP) ^{2, 7}	USDA, RD	\$125 million in grants to intermediary lenders to facilitate financing for start-up, expansion, and operation of meat and poultry processing operations
Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance (MPPTA) ^{5, 8}	USDA, AMS	Up to \$25 million in cooperative agreements to support technical assistance delivery for participants in USDA Meat and Poultry Supply Chain programs
Meat and Poultry Agricultural Workforce Training (AWT) ⁹	USDA, NIFA	\$20 million in grants for workforce development to train workers to meet the demand for both current processors and increased independent processing capacity
Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (FPEP) ^{10, 11}	USDA, RD	Up to \$500 million in grants to expand manufacturing and processing of fertilizer and nutrient alternatives
Cotton and Wool Apparel Program (CAWA) ^{12, 13}	USDA, FSA	Assistance to eligible manufactures of worsted wool suits, sport coats, pants, or Pima cotton dress shirts; Pima cotton spinners; and wool fabric manufacturers and wool spinners who experienced at least a 15-percent decrease in gross sales or consumption in calendar year 2020 compared with 2017, 2018, or 2019
Support for Cotton Merchandisers ¹⁴	TBD	\$100 million appropriated for cotton merchandiser pandemic assistance
Commodity Container Assistance Program (CCAP) ^{10, 15}	USDA, FSA	Partnerships with both the Port of Oakland and the Northwest Seaport Alliance to help ease port congestion by providing assistance to owners of agricultural commodities to help offset the added expenses associated with picking up empty containers at those temporary sites
Cattle Contracts Library program ¹⁶	USDA, AMS	Launch of pilot program to collect and report aggregated data on contracts between producers and packers for fed cattle

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Initiative	Administering agency	Description
New legislation		
Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022 ¹⁷	FMC	Gives FMC authority to investigate and resolve complaints about detention and late fee charges at U.S. ports, and prohibits ocean carriers and terminal operators from refusing cargo when space is available
Amendment to the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act ¹⁸	NA	Expands liability protections for the donation of food and grocery products, including for products where donors charge a small fee to cover only costs related to handling, packing, and transportation

AMS = Agricultural Marketing Service. RD = Rural Development. NIFA = National Institute for Food and Agriculture. FMC = U.S. Federal Maritime Commission. NA = Not applicable. TBD = To Be Determined.

¹See *Food System Transformation* landing page on the USDA website for more information.

²Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2021 (Public Law (Pub. L.) 116-260).

³See Funding Opportunity USDA-AMS-TM-LRFD-C-0001 for more information.

⁴See *Meat and Poultry Supply Chain* landing page on the USDA website for more information.

⁵Authorized in the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 117-2).

⁶See Funding Opportunity RD-RBS-22-01-MPPEP for more information.

⁷See Funding Opportunity RD-RBS-22-01-MPILP for more information.

⁸See *Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity – Technical Assistance Program Fact Sheet* on the USDA, AMS website for more information.

⁹See Funding Opportunity USDA-NIFA-AFRI-009041 for more information.

¹⁰Authorized by section 5b of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(b)).

¹¹See Funding Opportunity RD-RBS-22-01-FPEP for more information.

¹²Authorized by section 5e of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(e)).

¹³See 87 FR 27083 for more information.

¹⁴Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-328).

¹⁵See 87 FR 32112 for more information.

¹⁶See 87 FR 74951 for more information.

¹⁷Pub. L. 117-146.

¹⁸Pub. L. 117-362.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

Amongst initiatives targeting food systems more broadly, in June 2022, USDA announced details of the Department’s Food System Transformation framework. The framework incorporated the lessons learned from recent food supply chain disruptions to offer programs that strengthen the food system at all steps of the supply chain, including helping producers to access markets, improving the resiliency of food processing to avoid future disruptions, building or maintaining infrastructure for food distribution and aggregation, and helping consumers to access healthy foods (USDA, 2022b). USDA has also included a variety of existing and new programs under the framework, with the launch of additional programs anticipated for 2023.

One of the initiatives included under the framework was the creation of Regional Food Business Centers to support a more resilient, diverse, and competitive U.S. food system. USDA announced in September 2022, that it would make available approximately \$400 million to support the establishment of at least six such Regional Food Business Centers (USDA, AMS, 2022f). Each center will have three primary functions:

- Serving as regional hubs that coordinate across geographic areas with USDA, Federal, State, and Tribal agencies to engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of plans to serve the region;
- Providing direct technical assistance to small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses; and
- Supporting projects focused on regional needs and businesses working toward expansion.

Three of the selected centers will serve all or part of the three high-priority areas—i.e., counties along the United States/Mexico border, areas of the Mississippi Delta and the Southeast, and high-need areas of Appalachia—and one national Tribal Center will be funded as well. Each center will be awarded between \$15 and \$50 million.

Outside of broad, food system-wide initiatives, various policy developments in 2022 sought to address specific vulnerabilities or sustainability issues within agrofood value chains. Subsequent to the signing of Executive Order 14036 on Promoting Competition in the American Economy in July 2021, the White House released an Action Plan for a Fairer, More Competitive, and More Resilient Meat and Poultry Supply Chain in January 2022. The plan included a pledge of \$1 billion to improve the competitiveness and resiliency of the meat and poultry sector, including by expanding and diversifying processing capacity; strengthening the financing system for independent processors, building a pipeline of workers; helping facilities to complete requirements to achieve a Federal Grant of Inspection under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the Poultry Products Inspection Act; and promoting innovation and lower barriers to entry in the sector (The White House, 2022a). To bring this plan to fruition, USDA launched the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative, which includes a toolbox of programs administered by various USDA agencies that are intended to improve meat and poultry processing infrastructure and to ensure more competitive meat processing markets.

Several programs were launched under the umbrella of the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative in 2022. In February, USDA's Rural Development (RD) Rural Business Cooperative Service (RBCS) announced the launch of the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP), which made \$150 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) available in the form of grants for the lesser of up to \$25 million or 20 percent of total project costs to expand processing capacity (USDA, Rural Development (RD), 2022c). Funds could be used to build new facilities, expand and/or modernize existing facilities, install or modernize equipment, help with packaging requirements, aid in improving food safety, support workforce recruitment, and offset costs associated with becoming an inspected facility. USDA, RD subsequently launched the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP) in May. MPILP provides grant funding to lenders who finance the start-up, expansion, or operation of meat and poultry processing facilities (USDA, RD, 2022b). Authorized by the 2021 CAA, MPILP could be used to finance the construction of new facilities and the purchase of associated land, modernization or expansion of existing facilities and/or the equipment within the facility, or investments in cooperatives, feasibility studies, start-up costs, and other qualifying uses.

To help ensure applicants were successful in carrying out their plans, in March, USDA, AMS launched the Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance (MPPTA) program. MPPTA dedicated up to \$25 million in ARPA funding to support organizations that provide technical assistance to applicants and recipients of grants through MPPEP and the Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant program (MPIRG), which launched in 2021. MPPTA facilitates applicants' access to technical advisors in industrial, academic, State, and Federal government sectors. MPPTA provides focused outreach to underserved communities including small, rural, minority-owned, Native American, and Tribal-owned businesses (USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), 2022b).

USDA's investments in workforce development under the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative complemented MPPTA and MPPEP efforts to support facility expansion and modernization. Facilitated by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the Meat and Poultry Agricultural Workforce Training (AWT) grant program was launched in May. The workforce development program offers \$20 million in funding to community, junior, and technical colleges to train workers to meet the demand for current processors and increased independent processing capacity. Funding from the AWT program is dedicated to expanding job-based, experiential learning opportunities, acquisition of industry-accepted credentials and occupational competencies for students joining the meat and poultry processing workforce. Grant awards of up to \$650,000 were authorized through AWT.

USDA, NIFA also designated an additional \$5 million to support Extension Risk Management Education (\$2.5 million) and Sustainable Agricultural Research Education (\$2.5 million) Programs. This funding supported the development of meat and poultry processing training and educational materials to respond to place-based needs—especially for small- and medium-sized farmers and ranchers, or for niche markets like mobile processing units or agritourism operations with onsite livestock rearing and restaurant facilities.

USDA, NIFA provided an additional \$15 million to support meat and poultry processing and workforce development at minority serving institutions. These institutions included 1890 Institutions Centers of Excellence, Tribal colleges and universities, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Institutions, Insular Area Institutions, and Hispanic-serving institutions.

Outside of programs targeting meat processing supply chain functionality, other developments were directed at upstream supply chains such as fertilizers, as well as downstream supply and logistical chains. Global fertilizer prices increased 192 percent from December 2020 to January 2023 (USDA, AMS, 2020; USDA, AMS, 2023). This increase was the result of a combination of factors, including strong global fertilizer demand, high prices for natural gas (a key input in fertilizer production), and supply issues related to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), 2022). In response, USDA announced the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (FPEP) in September 2022, which offers up to \$500 million in grant funding to expand fertilizer and nutrient alternative manufacturing and processing (USDA, RD, 2022a). The program made available grants of between \$1 million and \$100 million for eligible applicants³¹ for various purposes related to increasing domestic availability of fertilizer and nutrient alternatives. Some of the related purposes include constructing of a new facility, purchasing of an existing facility, modernizing or expanding existing facilities and equipment, and recruiting and developing the fertilizer and nutrient alternative workforce. In addition, USDA considered applicant operations' sustainability, with an emphasis on innovation to improve fertilizer production methods and efficiency.

With respect to downstream supply chains, in May 2022 USDA launched a new temporary assistance program targeting apparel manufacturers. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in demand for worsted wool suits, sport coats, dress pants, and Pima cotton dress shirts, which in turn resulted in temporary shutdowns or reduced hours of operation for many U.S. apparel manufacturers. In response, USDA launched the Cotton and Wool Apparel Program (CAWA) and made \$50 million available through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act³² to offer assistance for eligible manufacturers of worsted wool suits, sport coats, pants, or Pima cotton dress shirts; Pima cotton spinners; and wool fabric manufacturers and wool spinners (USDA, FSA, 2022d). Eligible entities must have filed an affidavit for a payment in any year from 2017 to 2021 in accordance with the Wool Apparel Manufacturers Trust Fund and the Pima Agriculture Cotton Trust Fund. In addition, eligible entities needed to have experienced at least a 15-percent decrease in

³¹ For example, manufacturing must take place within the United States and its territories.

³² As authorized by section 5(e) of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714c(e))

gross sales or consumption compared with prepandemic levels. CAWA was administered via USDA, FSA, and payments to eligible entities were based on their prepandemic market share and were subject to payment limitations.

Other assistance was appropriated specifically for cotton merchandisers—that is, entities that market, sell, or trade cotton to end users. One provision of the 2023 CAA appropriated \$100 million for COVID-19 pandemic assistance to eligible cotton merchandisers. Program details related to the distribution of this assistance had not been developed by the end of 2022.

Related to wider agricultural supply chain logistics, USDA launched the Commodity Container Assistance Program (CCAP) in May 2022. During the pandemic, agricultural commodity shipments were severely affected by ocean carrier service disruptions, including a lack of available containers and unpredictable return dates. For example, researchers estimated that service disruptions from May to September 2021 reduced agricultural exports shipped by container (by value) from California ports by 17 percent compared to a counterfactual scenario under which trade was not disrupted (Carter et al., 2021). In response, USDA launched CCAP. This program included partnerships with the Port of Oakland and the Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA)³³ in Washington to address logistical challenges associated with the availability and flow of containers to transport agricultural commodities. CCAP provided payments to owners of domestically grown or produced commodities, or to the designated marketing agent of the owner at a rate of \$125 per container for picking up empty shipping containers at the Port of Oakland, and \$200 for filled dry containers or \$400 for filled refrigerated containers that were delivered to designated temporary storage terminals at the Port of Oakland and NWSA ports (USDA, FSA, 2022g). Payments were made available for eligible containers picked up or stored from March 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

USDA made other efforts to improve the functionality and transparency of the cattle market. In December, USDA, AMS established the Cattle Contracts Library pilot program, which was modeled on the existing Swine Contract Library. Through the program, USDA, AMS will collect and report aggregated data on contracts between producers and packers for fed cattle. The rule required that all packers who slaughtered an average of at least 5 percent of the number of nationally slaughtered, fed cattle in the past 5 years participate in the pilot. The pilot requires that packers submit data on contract information and the actual and estimated numbers of cattle purchased under contract in a given time frame (USDA, AMS, 2022a). Data to be submitted under the program include contract types and terms, base prices and adjustments, schedules of premiums or discounts, specifications relating to cattle attributes, delivery and transportation terms, financing, risk- or profit-sharing, and volume provisions. As of January 2023, packers are required to submit this data for oral and written contracts.

Two pieces of legislation were passed in 2022 that sought to improve supply chain functionality and sustainability. The first of these, the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–146) worked to address COVID-19 pandemic-related delays at U.S. ports and the rising fees that left U.S. agricultural producers struggling to export their products. The Act gives additional authority to the U.S. Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) to investigate complaints about cargo and shipping container demurrage and detention³⁴ fee charges to determine whether those charges are reasonable, and if necessary, require that unreasonable charges be refunded by ocean carriers. The Act also prohibits ocean carriers and terminal operators from

³³ The Northwest Seaport Alliance is the operating partnership between the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma.

³⁴ Demurrage charges refer to fees applied to containers or cargo not picked up from a port or terminal within a predetermined amount of time. Detention charges refer to fees applied to containers outside of the port if the container is not returned within a predetermined amount of time. Further information about demurrage and detention fees can be found in U.S. Federal Maritime Commission, *Rules, rates, and practices relating to detention, demurrage, and free time for containerized imports and exports moving through selected United States ports* (2015).

refusing cargo when space is available and requires those entities to report the number of empty containers being transported to the FMC to reduce export backlogs for agricultural and other products.

Supply chain sustainability was the focus of other legislation. Researchers estimated that nearly one-third of the U.S. food supply is lost³⁵ from human consumption at the retail and consumer levels (Buzby, 2014). Not only do these losses represent food that could have otherwise been eaten, but they also represent a significant source of GHG emissions from their decomposition in landfills (EPA, 2021). New legislation passed in 2022 sought to reduce food losses by incentivizing food donation instead of disposal. This legislation, an Act to amend the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Pub. L. 117–362), expands liability protections for the donation of food and grocery products to include donations of an “apparently fit grocery product” or “apparently wholesome food.” The Act also expands legal protections to cover donations where donors charge a small fee to cover only costs related to handling, packing, and transportation. Previously, these types of donations (where the food was donated, but some charge was included to cover the logistics of donation) were not covered by the same legal protections, which incentivized firms to throw food away rather than donate it.

Food and Nutrition Assistance

Policies related to USDA’s food and nutrition assistance programs continued developing in 2022 following temporary changes beginning in March 2020 as a response to the pandemic (Jones et al., 2022; Toossi et al., 2021). To meet the continuing need for nutrition assistance in 2022, USDA expanded program benefits, extended waivers to increase the scope and coverage of existing programs, and continued to temporarily operate the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program (created in the initial aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic) (table 8).

Table 8
Food and nutrition assistance policy developments, 2022

Initiative	Description
Food assistance programs	
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Permanent increase in maximum benefit of about 21 percent beginning in October 2021 due to reevaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan ¹
	Nine States stopped issuing supplemental emergency allotments ²
	Continued suspension of work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents ^{3,4}
	Continued administrative flexibilities ⁵
	Interim final rule released establishing the National Accuracy Clearinghouse interstate data system ⁶
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Cash Value Voucher (CVV) increased for fruit and vegetable purchases extended through September 2022 ⁷
	In response to infant formula recalls and supply chain disruptions, State WIC agencies granted flexibilities that allowed WIC participants to exchange recalled formula, as well as to receive different brands, forms, and sizes of formula ⁸
	Waiver issued allowing for the use of certain imported infant formula as part of WIC ⁹
	Flexibilities affording WIC participants access to infant formula extended through December 2022 ⁸
	The Access to Baby Formula Act, 2022 was passed, which required USDA and WIC State agencies to prepare for potential infant formula supply chain disruptions, and provided USDA with the authority to modify WIC administration requirements during emergencies or supply chain disruptions ¹⁰

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³⁵ USDA, ERS defines “food loss” as the amount of edible food, postharvest, that is available for human consumption but is not consumed for any reason. It includes cooking loss and natural shrinkage (e.g. moisture loss); loss from mold, pests, or inadequate climate control; and plate waste. “Food waste” is a component of food loss and occurs when an edible item goes unconsumed, such as food discarded by retailers due to blemishes or plate waste discarded by consumers. See Buzby et al. (2014) for more information.

Initiative	Description
National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	Transitional nutrition standards pertaining to flavored milk, whole grains, and sodium limits established for the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years ¹¹ The Keep Kids Fed Act extended some child nutrition program waivers and also increased Federal reimbursement rates for NSLP, SBP, and CACFP meals for the 2022–2023 school year ¹² \$100 million for the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative announced ¹³ Provision of nearly \$1.5 billion in Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) funds in calendar year 2022 to support the purchase of domestically produced foods for their meal programs ^{14, 15} \$30 million authorized for school kitchen Equipment Assistance Grants ¹⁶
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO)	Keep Kids Fed Act extended waivers allowing SFSP and SSO to provide free meals to all children in all months and areas through September 30, 2022 ¹² Summer meal programs in rural areas authorized to allow for meals to be picked-up and served in noncongregate settings ¹⁶
Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT)	Expanded to include qualifying children who entered virtual academies or home-schooling due to the Coronavirus pandemic ¹⁷ Creation of a permanent summer electronic benefit transfer program to replace P-EBT beginning in summer 2024 ¹⁶
Other developments	
Public Charge Rule	Public Charge Rule revised to exclude programs that provide noncash benefits, such as SNAP, WIC, and child nutrition programs ¹⁸
National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health	Strategy released in conjunction with the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health; it seeks to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030 ¹⁹

¹See *Thrifty Food Plan, 2021 Report*, FNS-916, August 2021 on the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) website for more information.

²See *Snap COVID-19 Emergency Allotments Guidance* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

³First authorized in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Public Law (Pub. L.) 116–127).

⁴See *Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) Waivers* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

⁵See *SNAP COVID-19 Waivers* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

⁶See 87 FR 59633 for more information.

⁷Cash Value Voucher (CVV) increases were authorized in the Further Extending Government Funding Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–80), the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Pub. L.117–103), and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117–328).

⁸See *Infant Formula Shortage Response* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

⁹See *Additional WIC Flexibilities – Imported Infant Formula under FDA’s Infant Formula Enforcement Discretion* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

¹⁰Access to Baby Formula Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–129).

¹¹See 87 FR 6984 for more information.

¹²Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–158).

¹³See Funding Opportunity USDA-FNS-2023-HMI for more information.

¹⁴Authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act (15 U.S.C. 714).

¹⁵See *Third Allocation of Supply Chain Assistance Funds to Alleviate Supply Chain Disruptions in the School Meal Programs* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

¹⁶Authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117–328).

¹⁷See *Pandemic EBT – Updated Guidance on Virtual Schools* on the USDA, FNS website for more information.

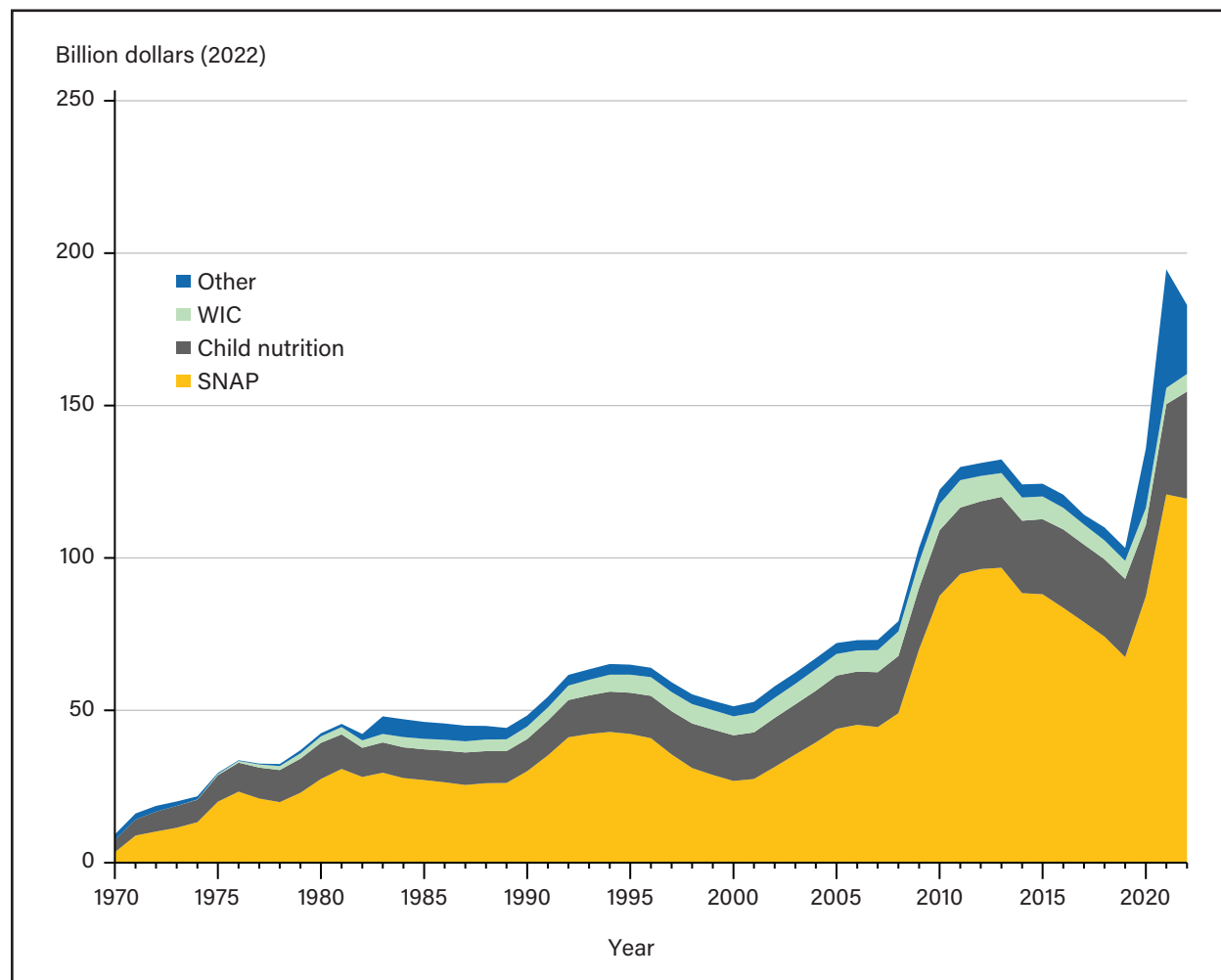
¹⁸See 87 FR 55472 for more information.

¹⁹See *Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health* on the White House website for more information.

Source: Compiled by USDA, Economic Research Service using sources cited in footnotes.

These developments collectively contributed to annual spending of \$183.0 billion in fiscal year 2022 (the period October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022), which was a slight decline from the record expenditures in fiscal year 2021 (Toossi & Jones, 2023) (figure 3).

Figure 3
USDA inflation-adjusted spending on food and nutrition assistance



FY = Fiscal year. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Child nutrition = National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Special Milk Program, and commodity costs. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Other = All other Federal spending on USDA food and nutrition assistance programs, including Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer in FYs 2020–2022 and the Farmers to Families Food Box Program in FYs 2021–2022.

Note: Figure based on historical program data released by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in January 2023 and total spending data from October 2022 Program Information Report (Keydata) released by USDA, FNS in January 2023 and the September 2022 Keydata released by USDA, FNS in December 2022. Data are supplemented by additional information on Seamless Summer Option earnings and other child nutrition costs provided by USDA, FNS as of January 2023. Spending in “Billion dollars (2022),” adjusted using the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service and USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service.

In 2022, the USDA administered 15 food assistance and nutrition programs, among the largest being the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

SNAP—the largest of the food and nutrition assistance programs—provides benefits that vary with income to households meeting certain income, asset, and other criteria. These benefits are used to purchase groceries at authorized retailers through electronic benefit transfers (EBT). The first full year of higher maximum benefits for SNAP recipients based on the reevaluated Thrifty Food Plan was 2022. The June 2021 plan reevaluation—which determines the maximum SNAP benefit—resulted in a 21-percent increase in the maximum SNAP benefit, with benefits for all recipients generally rising between \$12.00 and \$16.00 per person per month.³⁶ This was the first time that USDA permanently increased the real purchasing power of SNAP benefits (i.e., beyond cost-of-living adjustments) since the introduction of the Thrifty Food Plan in 1975.³⁷

As in 2020 and 2021, USDA continued to grant State agencies several temporary administrative flexibilities in 2022 and continued to suspend the time limits on benefit receipt for able-bodied adults without dependents who do not meet work requirements for food and nutrition assistance programs. States with public health emergency declarations in place were allowed to continue to issue monthly SNAP supplemental emergency allotments in 2022. In States that issued them, emergency allotments supplemented each household's regular benefit by the larger of \$95.00 or the amount needed to bring a household to the maximum SNAP benefit for their size. In fiscal year 2022, the average emergency allotment—including other minor disaster supplements—among households that received them was about \$95.00 per person per month.³⁸ Eight States ended emergency allotments in 2021, and nine more stopped issuing them in 2022 (USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), 2023b).³⁹

In fiscal year 2022, SNAP participation averaged 41.2 million participants per month and the benefit increases in place contributed to Federal SNAP spending of \$119.5 billion, the second highest amount on record behind fiscal year 2021, which saw inflation-adjusted spending of \$120.8 billion (figure 3). In October 2022, USDA released an interim final rule establishing the National Accuracy Clearinghouse, an interstate data system intended to enhance SNAP program integrity by preventing individuals from receiving SNAP benefits from multiple States at the same time. The 2023 CAA, passed at the end of 2022, terminated all emergency allotments after the February 2023 benefit month. Accordingly, total benefit issuance—and Federal spending on SNAP—are likely to decrease in 2023.

WIC provides supplemental food packages—along with nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and healthcare referrals—to low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to 5 years of age who are at nutritional risk. In March 2021, States were given the option to temporarily increase the cash value voucher for fruit and vegetable purchases (one part of the WIC food package) from \$9.00 to \$11.00 up to \$35.00 through September 30, 2021. States were required to increase this amount to \$24.00 for child participants, \$43.00 for pregnant and postpartum women participants, and \$47.00 for breastfeeding partici-

³⁶ This permanent 21-percent increase in the maximum allotment began in October 2021, replacing a temporary 15-percent increase that began in January 2021 and ending September 2021. As a result, SNAP participants' benefits did not actually increase a full 21 percent from September to October 2021.

³⁷ More details on SNAP and the Thrifty Food Plan are available from the USDA, FNS dedicated website, "SNAP and the Thrifty Food Plan."

³⁸ Author calculation using preliminary data from the October 2022 *Program Information Report (Keydata)* released by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (2023a).

³⁹ Idaho, North Dakota, Arkansas, Florida, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Missouri ended the emergency allotment issuance in 2021. Mississippi, Tennessee, Iowa, Arizona, Kentucky, Wyoming, Georgia, Indiana, and Alaska ended the emergency allotment issuance in 2022.

pants from October 1 through December 31, 2021. Subsequent legislation⁴⁰ in December 2021, March 2022, and December 2022, extended these higher amounts (adjusted for inflation) through March 2022, September 2022, and September 2023, respectively.

Infant formula supply chain issues exacerbated by Abbott Laboratories’—a major infant formula manufacturer—formula recall initiated in February 2022 also precipitated USDA action. In response to supply shortages, USDA allowed WIC participants to exchange recalled formula, to receive different brands (including those imported from abroad), forms (e.g., liquid or ready to feed), and sizes of infant formula than they typically would. In October 2022, these flexibilities were extended through the end of calendar year 2022. Additionally, the Access to Baby Formula Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–129), passed in May 2022, required USDA and WIC State agencies to prepare for potential infant formula supply chain disruptions. In addition, the Act provided USDA with the authority to modify WIC administrative requirements during emergencies or supply chain disruptions. In fiscal year 2022, spending on WIC totaled \$5.7 billion and participation averaged 6.3 million people per month.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provide free and low-cost meals to children in schools and childcare providers.⁴¹ In typical years, meals served through these programs must meet Federal nutrition standards, among other requirements. However, in response to supply chain issues stemming from the pandemic, USDA issued a waiver in 2020 allowing schools and childcare providers to serve meals that did not meet nutrition standards to ensure the continued provision of meals to children. USDA also issued waivers in the same year allowing for other changes—such as allowing meals to be picked up by parents, provided outside of traditional meal service hours, and served in noncongregate settings. These waivers were to expire at the end of June 2022, but some were extended through the end of September 2022 by the Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–158), which was passed in June 2022. In anticipation of the expiration of waivers, USDA established transitional nutrition standards for NSLP, SBP, and CACFP meals in February 2022 pertaining to flavored milk, wholegrains, and sodium for the 2022–2023 school year to allow schools and childcare providers additional time to recover from the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Other 2022 changes included increased Federal reimbursement rates to schools and childcare centers for NSLP, SBP, and CACFP meals for the 2022–2023 school year—also part of the Keep Kids Fed Act—and supplemental funding to help support the purchase of domestically-produced foods for school meal programs, announced in June and September 2022. Also in September 2022, USDA launched the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative, a \$100-million program aimed at improving the nutritional quality of NSLP and SBP meals.

The expanded scope and coverage of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), NSLP, and SBP’s Seamless Summer Option (SSO) that began in April 2020 in response to pandemic-related disruptions to school and childcare provider operations also continued through September 2022. Typically, SSO and SFSP provide meals to children through qualified organizations in low-income areas during unexpected school closures or when schools are not in session, such as summer break. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USDA waived these requirements, allowing the programs to provide free meals to all children, in all months, and all areas. Most of these waivers—such as the waiver lifting restrictions on when SFSP and SSO sites can operate—expired in June 2022, while some—such as the waiver allowing SSO and SFSP to serve meals in all areas—were extended through September 2022, by the Keep Kids Fed Act. Overall, in fiscal year 2022,

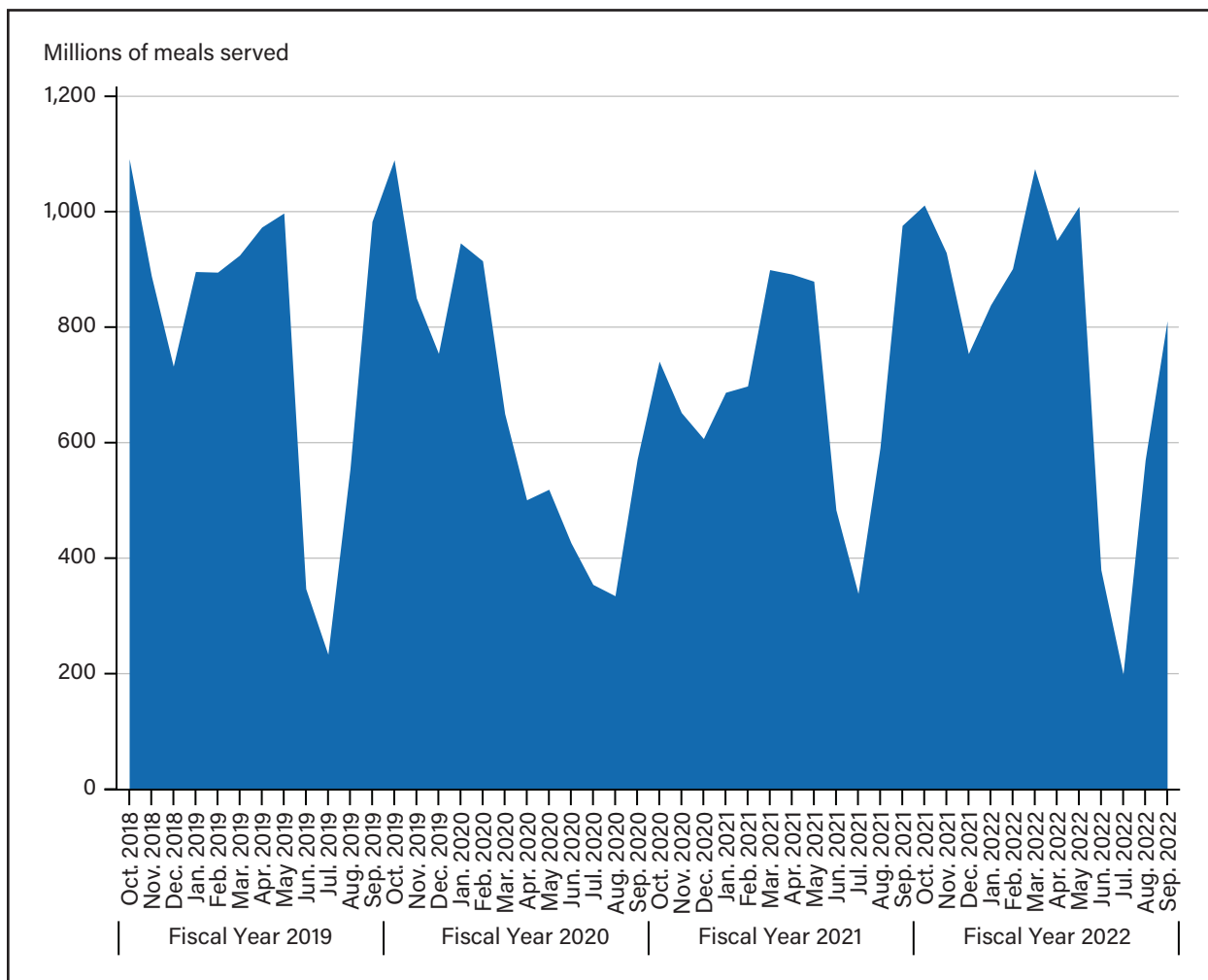
⁴⁰ These were the: Further Extending Government Funding Act of 2022 (Pub. L. 117–70), passed in December 2021; the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Pub. L. 117–103), passed in March 2022; and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117–328), passed in December 2022.

⁴¹ While the Child and Adult Food Care Program does serve some older or functionally impaired adults, more than 95 percent of its meals are served to children.

a total of 9.4 billion meals were provided through NSLP, SBP, CACFP, and SFSP—about the same as in prepandemic years—at a cost of \$33.6 billion (figure 4).

Figure 4

Total meals served across the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program, fiscal years 2019–22



Note: Total includes meals served through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program's Seamless Summer Option.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

The temporary Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program was created in March 2020. The program initially reimbursed only low-income households with children for the value of school meals in areas where COVID-19 disrupted in-person school attendance. In October 2020, P-EBT was expanded to include younger children not enrolled in school if they were living in households receiving SNAP benefits and in an area where schools were closed or operating with reduced hours or attendance. This expansion was also extended to include children in the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. In March 2021, the P-EBT was extended to also cover the summer months when most schools are closed for instruction. The program's scope was expanded again in September 2022 to cover children who entered virtual academies or homeschooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic but had attended an NSLP

participating school and were from low-income households. Throughout the course of fiscal year 2022, \$17.9 billion in P-EBT benefits were issued nationwide.

There were several other policy developments in September 2022. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced a revision to its Public Charge Rule effective December 2022. Prior to the revision, the rule required noncitizens applying for visas, admission, and adjustment of their status to establish that they are not likely at any time to rely on Government assistance—including programs providing noncash benefits such as SNAP, WIC, and the child nutrition programs. The new rule excludes noncash benefit programs from the list of programs used to determine whether a noncitizen might become a public charge. Additionally, the White House hosted the Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health—the first in five decades—to develop a National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, which was released on September 27, 2022. Food and nutrition assistance programs were key components of the strategy seeking to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030. Actions highlighted in the strategy include increasing access to free school meals, creating a new program providing benefits to school children in the summer months when most schools are closed, expanding SNAP eligibility, and incentivizing fruit and vegetable purchases as part of SNAP through various initiatives.

The 2023 CAA included provisions in support of these aims. The legislation authorized USDA to create a new child nutrition program, the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program, or Summer EBT, extend some flexibilities for summer meal programs, and provides additional funding to schools. Summer EBT will provide \$40.00 to children from households with incomes that are up to 185 percent of the Federal poverty level when schools are out of session during the summer months and is set to begin operating in Summer 2024. New flexibilities for the summer meal programs will permit meals to be picked-up and served in noncongregate settings in rural areas. Finally, the legislation provides \$30 million for school kitchen equipment grants.

Summary and Conclusion

This report examined developments in U.S. agricultural policies in 2022, with a focus on policies pertaining to production agriculture, agrofood value chains, and food and nutrition assistance. In the production agriculture sector, 2022 saw the launch of two new temporary disaster programs—the Emergency Livestock Relief Program and Emergency Relief Program—for producers affected by extreme weather, and new temporary assistance programs under the umbrella of the Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. USDA also instituted certain discretionary changes to Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish, introduced certain discretionary changes and administrative flexibilities for various conservation programs, updated existing farm loan programs, instituted a new debt relief program, updated certain crop insurance products, and amended crop insurance reporting regulations. As part of climate change mitigation efforts, USDA launched the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, investing more than \$3.1 billion in projects to expand markets for climate-smart commodities and generate greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation benefits from climate-smart production. The December 2022 passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA), 2023 furthered efforts toward climate mitigation in agriculture. The Act included a version of the Growing Climate Solutions Act, which authorizes a voluntary Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Program, and included a version of the Sponsoring USDA Sustainability Targets in Agriculture to Incentivize Natural Solutions (SUSTAINS) Act, which allows USDA to accept and use private funding for public-private partnerships related to climate change or certain other natural resource issues. Additional climate benefits will also be attained through the authorization of \$19.5 billion in new spending until 2031 for existing USDA conservation programs (the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program,

Conservation Stewardship Program, Conservation Technical Assistance, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program) in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. USDA also put in place new measures aimed at improving equity in 2022, including releasing the Department's Equity Action Plan, inaugurating the USDA Equity Commission, and launching new equity-focused programs. Related to organics, the rules related to transitioning animals to organic production were clarified in 2022, and USDA launched a new initiative and programs to support producers transitioning to organic production. Outside of USDA, Congress authorized the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a new workplan addressing the agency's obligations under the Endangered Species Act.

Various efforts were also made to reinforce agricultural supply chains after certain vulnerabilities were illuminated by either the COVID-19 pandemic or other recent shocks. This included the launch of both comprehensive policy initiatives (such as the Food System Transformation framework and Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative) as well as the introduction of new programs under those initiatives (such as Regional Food Business Centers or programs like the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program, the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program, and Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance). Other agrofood developments included efforts to increase domestic availability of fertilizer and nutrient alternatives through the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program; to provide temporary assistance to apparel manufacturers through the Cotton and Wool Apparel Program; to assist with added logistical costs for container transportation due to the COVID-19 pandemic through the Commodity Container Assistance Program; to improve the transparency of the cattle market through the establishment of a Cattle Contracts Library Pilot Program; to improve supply chain functionality through the passage of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022; and to incentivize donations of food and grocery products through new legislation amending the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.

Policy developments in 2022 related to food and nutrition sought to reinforce the consumer safety net and improve nutrition outcomes. This included the continuation of temporary administrative flexibilities and higher benefit levels for some food assistance programs. Other actions responded to supply shortages of infant formula, including the passage of the Access to Baby Formula Act of 2022. The Act required USDA and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) State agencies to prepare for possible disruptions to infant formula supply chains and provided USDA the authority to modify some WIC administrative requirements during future supply chain disruptions. Also, 2022 saw the creation of a new, permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program, which will provide assistance to families of school-aged children in the summer months when schools are not in session. Finally, the national Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health was held in September, which led to the development of a national strategy for ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030.

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