

Wyoming Ag Producers are facing some tough conditions in the state right now. To help alleviate some of those issues, the Wyoming Department of Agriculture reached out to surrounding states for available grass for rent. [Click here for a full list of current available pastures and feedlots](#)

Along with this, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced new flexibility and assistance in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's major conservation programs to help livestock producers as the drought continues to worsen. He has also encouraged crop insurance agencies to give a grace period to farmers on unpaid insurance premiums.

Vilsack used his authority to help create and encourage flexibility in 4 USDA programs: the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Federal Crop Insurance Program.

- **Conservation Reserve Program:** To assist farmers and ranchers affected by drought, Vilsack is using his discretionary authority to allow additional acres under CRP to be used for haying or grazing under emergency conditions. CRP is a voluntary program that provides producers annual rental payments on their land in exchange for planting resource conserving crops on cropland to help prevent erosion, provide wildlife habitat and improve the environment. CRP acres can already be used for emergency haying and grazing during natural disasters to provide much needed feed to livestock. Given the widespread nature of this drought, forage for livestock is already substantially reduced. The action today will allow lands that are not yet classified as “under severe drought” but that are “abnormally dry” to be used for haying and grazing. This will increase available forage for livestock. Haying and grazing will only be allowed following the local primary nesting season, which has already passed in most areas. Especially sensitive lands such as wetlands, stream buffers and rare habitats will not be eligible.

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program:** To assist farmers and ranchers affected by drought, Vilsack is using his discretionary authority to provide assistance to farmers and ranchers by allowing them to modify current EQIP contracts to allow for prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, water conservation and other conservation activities to address drought conditions. EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers on their land to address natural resource concerns on agricultural and forest land. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will work closely with producers to modify existing EQIP contracts to ensure successful implementation of planned conservation practices. Where conservation activities have failed because of drought, NRCS will look for opportunities to work with farmers and ranchers to re-apply those activities. In the

short term, funding will be targeted towards hardest hit drought areas.

- **Wetlands Reserve Program:** To assist farmers and ranchers affected by drought, Vilsack is using his discretionary authority to authorize haying and grazing of WRP easement areas in drought-affected areas where such haying and grazing is consistent with conservation of wildlife habitat and wetlands. WRP is a voluntary conservation easement program that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to restore and protect valuable wetland resources on their property. For producers with land currently enrolled in WRP, NRCS has expedited its Compatible Use Authorization (CUA) process to allow for haying and grazing. The compatible use authorization process offers NRCS and affected producers with the management flexibility to address short-term resource conditions in a manner that promotes both the health of the land and the viability of the overall farming operation.

- **Federal Crop Insurance Program:** To help producers who may have cash flow problems due to natural disasters, USDA will encourage crop insurance companies to voluntarily forego charging interest on unpaid crop insurance premiums for an extra 30 days, to November 1, 2012, for spring crops. Policy holders who are unable to pay their premiums in a timely manner accrue an interest penalty of 1.25 percent per month until payment is made. In an attempt to help producers through this difficult time, Vilsack sent a letter to crop insurance companies asking them to voluntarily defer the accrual of any interest on unpaid spring crop premiums by producers until November. In turn, to assist the crop insurance companies, USDA will not require crop insurance companies to pay uncollected producer premiums until one month later.

There are drought programs that are currently available for those who have been affected by the drought. Below you can find the links to the fact sheets about each FSA disaster programs; Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), and Emergency Loans.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP): <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap>

- NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to a natural disaster.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP): <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation>

- ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to

rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for implementing emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought.

Emergency Loans. www.fsa.usda.gov/.../newsReleases?area=newsroom...

- Emergency loans are designed to provide loans to help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, and other natural disasters or quarantine.

There are three programs that have expired and are being considered in the current farm bill debate. The programs are: Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), Livestock Forage Program (LFP), and Emergency Assistance for Livestock.

For more information on these programs, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather that occurred on or after January 1, 2008 and before October 1, 2011.
- Emergency Assistance for Livestock provides emergency assistance to eligible producers and covers losses due to adverse weather, including blizzards and wildfires.
- Livestock Forage Program (LFP) provides compensation to producers that have suffered grazing losses for covered livestock on land that is native or improved pasture land with permanent vegetative cover or is planted specifically for grazing. LFP also provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses on rangeland managed by a federal agency if the eligible livestock producer is prohibited by the federal agency from grazing the normal permitted livestock on the managed rangeland due to qualifying fires.