American Farmland Trust

Getting started with the USDA FSA

Introduction

Before producers can participate in American Farmland Trust's (AFT) Beef Grazing Network (a USDA Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) Program) and receive either a "Grazing Champion" or "Network Grazier" award, their farm must be registered with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and fill out several forms to ensure you are eligible for funds from this project. Most producers have already done this; however, some may not have. Producers who are new to working with the USDA and want to enroll in this Project can follow this guidance to get started. Only you, the farmer, can conduct this process directly with the USDA; AFT can only provide guidance. If starting from scratch, it takes USDA a few weeks to process this information, so the sooner you work with your local FSA office, the better.

FSA is the primary agency for USDA records. They can help producers establish a Farm Record. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the agency that provides technical and financial assistance. They can help producers develop a conservation plan and file an application to adopt a practice(s). Both agencies are typically co-located in a USDA Service Center, located in your county or neighboring county. FSA and NRCS staff are available to meet one-on-one to discuss farm records and other producer needs.

Step-by-step guide to registering with FSA and establishing a Farm Record

1) **Locate the closest USDA Service Center.** The easiest way to find your closest USDA Service Center is to select your state and county here. This will give you a list of the closest offices near you. If you need language interpretation, a free, real-time translation service can be made available at the USDA Service Center. More information about this service can be found here.

2) **Make an appointment with FSA**. FSA offices can get busy and it's best to schedule ahead. Be sure to indicate the reason for the appointment (e.g., to establish a Farm Record) and ask what documents to bring. The following documents are typically needed:

   a) Proof of identity (e.g., driver's license).

   b) Official tax identification (e.g., Social Security Number or Employer Identification Number).

   c) Proof of land ownership (i.e., copy of property deed), or land lease agreement **covering the project period,** which includes a complete property description. Individuals with Heirs Property should notify FSA beforehand.

   d) Business documents (e.g., articles of incorporation, trust & estate documents, partnership agreements).

3) **Review the previous documents with FSA staff and register the farm.** Registering establishes a Farm Record and assigns Farm, Tract, and Field Number(s) to the land. If the land was recently purchased, check with FSA as it may already have a Farm Record, Farm Number, etc. Registering a farm with FSA involves completing the following:

   a) AD 2047 – Also referred to as a Customer Data Worksheet, this form facilitates the collection of data needed for a Business Partner Record.

   b) AD 1026 – This form certifies the land's compliance with USDA's Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) regulations. Prior to enrolling in this Project and adopting a Practice(s), a producer will need to request a Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report from the FSA to demonstrate the land's past compliance with HEL or WC provisions. Going forward, **producers will need to request a copy of their Subsidiary Print and Farm Data Report from their USDA Service Center and provide this to AFT each year they receive funds from the project**.

   c) CCC-902 – Farm Operating Plan form, which collects general information about the farm (land, equipment, capital and labor) to determine if the farm is eligible for federal funding support.

   d) Producers will also be asked to certify that they are not a foreign person or entity.

If producers would like assistance registering with FSA, they should notify AFT at **BeefGrazingNetwork@farmland.org**.