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Programs for Beginning, Limited Resource, Veteran, Socially Disadvantaged, and Tribal and Indigenous Farmers and Ranchers and for Small Farms and Ranches

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Historically underserved farmers and ranchers represent a diverse share of all U.S. agricultural producers.¹ This includes *socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers* (SDFRs), who are producers belonging to a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination, including tribal and Indigenous agricultural producers. At the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), historically underserved producers also include *beginning farmers or ranchers* (BFRs), *veteran farmers or ranchers* (VFRs), and *limited resource farmers and ranchers* (LRFs). Many such operations tend to be considered small in size, whether based on acreage or annual income. Although these producer groups are eligible for USDA programs available to all U.S. farmers and ranchers, recent legislation has provided targeted support for these groups referenced in authorized programs and policies in statute or regulation.

Terms and Definitions

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers

As defined in statute, SDFR commonly means “a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group.”² However, what constitutes a *socially disadvantaged group* is defined differently in the *U.S. Code*. Two separate definitions exist: one covers race, ethnicity, and gender; the other covers race and ethnicity only (excluding gender) (**Figure 1, text box**). Specifically, 7 U.S.C. §2279 defines a socially disadvantaged group as “a group whose members have been subjected to *racial or ethnic prejudice* because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.”³ Elsewhere (7 U.S.C. §2003), the definition also includes women, regardless of race and ethnicity, defining a socially disadvantaged group as “a group whose members have been subjected to *racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice* because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.”⁴

Figure 1. Alternative Statutory Definitions of Socially Disadvantaged Group

Definition including race, ethnicity and gender	Definition including race and ethnicity only
<p style="text-align: center;">7 U.S.C. §2003. Target participation rate</p> <p>e) Definitions</p> <p>(1) Socially disadvantaged group As used in this section, the term “socially disadvantaged group” means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.</p> <p>(2) Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher As used in this section, the term “socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7 U.S.C. §2279. Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) program</p> <p>(a) Definitions</p> <p>...</p> <p>(5) Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher The term “socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group.</p> <p>(6) Socially disadvantaged group The term “socially disadvantaged group” means a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.</p>

Source: CRS. See CRS Report R46727, *Defining a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (SDFR): In Brief*.

¹ USDA Farm Production and Conservation, “Get Started! A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers,” July 2022.

² 7 U.S.C. §2279(a)(6) and 7 U.S.C. §2003(e)(2).

³ 7 U.S.C. §2279(a)(5). Italics added for emphasis.

⁴ 7 U.S.C. §2003(e)(1); §355(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act. Italics added for emphasis. For other related background, see Caitlin Joseph, Gabrielle Roesch-McNally, and Ariel Looser, “The State of Gender Equity in U.S. Agriculture,” American Farmland Trust, 2024.

Terms and Definitions

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (SDFR)—“A farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group” where, depending on the program, a socially disadvantaged group means either “a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities” (7 U.S.C. §2279(a)(6)) or “a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities” (7 U.S.C. §2003(e)(1)).

Indian—“A person who is a member of an Indian tribe” where an *Indian tribe* means “any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians” (25 U.S.C. §5304(d)-(e); Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638)).

Beginning Farmer or Rancher (BFR)—“Term as defined by the Secretary” whereas a *qualified beginning farmer or rancher* means “an applicant ... who is eligible for assistance ... who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years” among other requirements (7 U.S.C. §1991 (a)(8) and (11)). For the purposes of crop insurance, a beginning producer is “a farmer or rancher who has not actively operated and managed a farm or ranch with a bona fide insurable interest in a crop or livestock as an owner-operator, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper for more than 5 crop years.” (7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(3)).

Veteran Farmer or Rancher (VFR)—“A farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(10) of title 38) and who - (A) has not operated a farm or ranch; (B) has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or (C) is a veteran” who has first obtained status as a veteran (as so defined) during the most recent 10-year period (7 U.S.C. §2279(A)(7)). For the purposes of crop insurance, a veteran producer is “a farmer or rancher who ... has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 5 years” (7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(14)). As defined in statute (38 U.S.C. §101), the term “veteran” means a person who “served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable).”

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher (LRFR)—As defined in USDA regulation (e.g., see 7 C.F.R. §§1470.3, 1465.3, 760.1901), refers to a farmer or rancher as (1) a person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by USDA) and (2) has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50% of county median household income in each of the previous two years (determined annually using Department of Commerce data). LRFRs include “a legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraphs (1) and (2).” Practically, USDA directs producers to use USDA’s Self-Determination Tool (<https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/DeterminationTool.aspx>) to determine an operation’s status on an annual basis.

Currently, USDA regulations define historically underserved producer to mean “a person, joint operation, legal entity, or Indian Tribe” who is a BFR, SDFR, LRFR, or VFR (e.g., see 7 C.F.R. §§1470, 1464). Since the 2008 farm bill, reference in statute to historically underserved producer was added to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, directing USDA “to the maximum extent practicable” to “conduct outreach” to BFRs, VFRs, SDFRs, and LRFRs (16 U.S.C. §3871e(d)).

Historically Underserved Producer—Following amendments in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246, §2708), USDA issued regulations for certain conservation programs that included the term *historically underserved producers*. The term was not specifically defined and remains undefined in statute. Rather, it described the collection of producer groups eligible for preference under USDA conservation programs. Currently, USDA regulations define *historically underserved producer* to mean “a person, joint operation, legal entity, or Indian Tribe” who is a BFR, SDFR, VFR, or LRFR (e.g., see 7 C.F.R. §§1470, 1464). Reference in statute to historically underserved producers was added in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, §2708) directing USDA “to the maximum extent practicable” to “conduct outreach” to BFRs, VFRs, SDFRs, and LRFRs (16 U.S.C. §3871e(d)). The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334, Title XII, Subtitle C) included a separate subtitle for historically underserved producers, which included USDA programs providing targeted support. The subtitle was alternatively titled “Socially Disadvantaged Producers and Limited Resource Producers” in P.L. 110-246 (Title XIV, Subtitle A) and in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, Title XII, Subtitle B).

Underserved Producer—“An individual (including a member of an Indian Tribe) that is - (I) a beginning farmer or rancher; (II) a veteran farmer or rancher; or (III) a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” (7 U.S.C. §1508(a)(7)(A)(ii)).

Source: CRS from various sources, including USDA’s Self-Determination Tool (<https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>).

In practice, SDFR eligibility for USDA farm support programs may vary depending on which definition is cited in statute for a particular program. While the definition most cited in USDA programs includes race and ethnic groups, women (regardless of race and ethnicity) may be included in the SDFR definition for fewer programs. SDFRs generally may belong to the following race and ethnic groups: African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asians, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, refugees, immigrants, and groups as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.⁵

According to USDA, in 2017 (based on the most recent available *Census of Agriculture* data),⁶ SDFRs numbered about 193,000 farms, accounting for 9% of all U.S. farms (based on the statutory definition at 7 U.S.C. §2279, excluding White, non-Hispanic women)⁷ or 604,000, accounting for 30% of all U.S. farms (based on the definition at 7 U.S.C. §2003, including all women, regardless of race and ethnicity).⁸ For more background, see CRS Report R46727, *Defining a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (SDFR): In Brief*.⁹ Available data on the number of SDFRs, regardless of the statutory definition referenced, may overlap with data for other underserved producer groups (such as BFRs, LRFs, and VFRs) and therefore are not additive given the possibility that an SDFR is also a member of another underserved group (e.g., some SDFRs may also be BFRs, LRFs, and/or VFRs).

Tribal and Indigenous Farmers and Ranchers

The statutory definition of SDFRs at 7 U.S.C. §2279 includes an Indian tribe (as defined at 25 U.S.C. §5304) or “a national tribal organization that has demonstrated experience in providing agriculture education or other agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in a region.” For purposes of this report, *tribes* refer to federally recognized tribes. Indigenous entities include tribal organizations such as tribal utility companies,¹⁰ Native Hawaiians, Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs),¹¹ and state-recognized tribes. Various USDA programs provide financial and technical assistance to tribes and Indigenous entities.¹²

⁵ USDA, Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), “Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Grant Program,” 2020, at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2501_FactSheet.pdf; and USDA, “Frequently Asked Questions 2501 Program,” at <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/frequently-asked-questions-2501-program>. For more background, see CRS In Focus IF12475, *Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Producers (2501 Program)*.

⁶ Communications between CRS and USDA personnel, February 16, 2024. Although USDA released preliminary 2022 *Census of Agriculture* data in February, data on the producer groups covered in this report are not yet available. Data on these producer groups usually require additional special or custom tabulations of the data by USDA that are generally released well after USDA releases census data for some of the leading national agricultural data categories.

⁷ CRS from a USDA custom tabulation of the 2017 *Census of Agriculture* (Inquiry 23627, March 5, 2021).

⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Agricultural Lending, Information on Credit and Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Is Limited*, GAO-19-539, July 2019.

⁹ For related background, see CRS In Focus IF12096, *Farm Bill Primer: Beginning and Underserved Producers*, and CRS In Focus IF12160, *Farm Bill Primer: Support for Native Agricultural Producers*.

¹⁰ Some statutes generally reference the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) definition of tribal organization, which is an organization “recognized governing body of any Indian tribe; any legally established organization of Indians which is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by such governing body or which is democratically elected by the adult members of the Indian community to be served by such organization and which includes the maximum participation of Indians in all phases of its activities” (ISDEAA, 25 U.S.C. §5304).

¹¹ The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.) divided the state of Alaska into 12 geographic regions and established Village and Regional ANCs, which are for-profit corporations. ANCs are not tribes, although there are tribes located within ANC boundaries.

¹² A federally recognized tribe is one that is generally eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States “because of their status as Indians” (25 C.F.R. §83.2). Some statutes use the term “Indian tribe,” which is (continued...)

According to USDA, in 2017, more than 79,000 farmers and ranchers identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, including producers who identified in combination with another race, accounting for 2% of all U.S. producers.¹³ Agricultural sales were \$3.5 billion in 2017, or about 1% of total U.S. farm-level sales. The largest share of producers who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (46%) are located in Arizona and Oklahoma. Other leading states were New Mexico, Texas, California, Montana, Missouri, Utah, Arkansas, Alabama, Oregon, and South Dakota. These operations cover 59 million acres of farm and grazing land. American Indian/Alaska Native producers, however, may lack legal title to land often held in trust by the federal government.¹⁴ As of 2023, there were 574 federally recognized Indian tribes.¹⁵

Available data on the number of American Indian/Alaska Native agricultural producers reflect a subset of data on SDFRs, and therefore these data might not be additive, regardless of the statutory definition referenced. In addition, data on the number of American Indian/Alaska Native producers may further overlap with data for other underserved producer groups and might not be additive. For example, some American Indian/Alaska Native producers may also be members of other SDFR producer groups or may be considered BFRs, LRFrs, and/or VFRs.

Beginning Farmers or Ranchers

In statute, BFRs are producers who have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years (7 U.S.C. §1991(a)(8) and (11)).

According to USDA, in 2017, there were more than 908,000 producers who identified as beginning producers, accounting for 27% of all U.S. agricultural producers; overall, more than 597,000 farms have a beginning producer, accounting for 29% of U.S. farms.¹⁶ Agricultural products sold by beginning producers totaled \$60.4 billion or about 15% of total U.S. farm-level sales in 2017. Land in farms operated by beginning producers accounted for about 16% of all land in farming. Available data on BFRs may include SDFRs, LRFrs, and VFRs, and therefore these data are not additive with those for other underserved producer groups.

Veteran Farmers or Ranchers

In the case of veterans who have served in the Armed Forces, for most USDA programs, VFRs are generally defined as having engaged in farming for no more than 10 years and who have first obtained status as veterans during the most recent 10-year period (7 U.S.C. §2279(A)(7)). For the purposes of crop insurance, a veteran producer is “a farmer or rancher who ... has operated a farm

defined in the ISDEAA (25 U.S.C. §5304) as “any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.”

¹³ USDA, American Indian/Alaska Native Producers, ACH17-7, October 2019.

¹⁴ For more background, see CRS Report R46727, *Defining a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (SDFR): In Brief*, and CRS In Focus IF12160, *Farm Bill Primer: Support for Native Agricultural Producers*. Other background is in CRS Report R46647, *Tribal Land and Ownership Statuses: Overview and Selected Issues for Congress*.

¹⁵ 88 *Federal Register* 2112-2116, January 12, 2023.

¹⁶ USDA, New and Beginning Producers, *2017 Census of Agriculture Highlights*, ACH17-23/November 2020, <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2020/census-beginning%20-farmers.pdf>, and CRS In Focus IF11227, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers*. Preliminary limited information indicates that BFRs comprise a growing share of all U.S. farms and ranches: The number of BFRs increased a reported 11% between the 2017 and 2022 census, and now accounts for 30% of all U.S. operations. See USDA, “USDA Releases 2022 Census of Agriculture Data,” February 13, 2024; USDA, Farm Producers, *2022 Census of Agriculture Highlights*, ACH22-2/February 2024, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2024/Census22_HL_FarmProducers_FINAL.pdf.

or ranch for not more than 5 years” (7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(14)). As defined in statute (38 U.S.C. §101), the term “veteran” means a person who “served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.” Other USDA guidance clarifies that a VFR “means a person who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable and who also meets the definition of beginning farmer or rancher (BFR).”¹⁷

USDA reports that there were nearly 371,000 producers who have served or are serving in the military in 2017, accounting for 11% of all U.S. agricultural producers.¹⁸ This estimate includes VFRs as defined in statute as well as other producers who have engaged in farming for more than 10 years (or more than 5 years) and who first obtained status as a veteran more than 10 years (or 5 years) ago. Available data on VFRs may include SDFRs, LRFrs, and BFRs, and therefore these data are not additive with those for other underserved producer groups.

Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers

As defined in USDA regulation, LRFr refers to a farmer or rancher with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using the Prices Paid by Farmer Index compiled by USDA) and who have a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50% of county median household income in each of the previous two years (determined annually using Department of Commerce data). LRFrs include “a legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraphs (1) and (2).”¹⁹ USDA’s Self-Determination Tool allows for an individual producer to determine an operation’s status on an annual basis.²⁰

USDA does not regularly report data on the number of LRFrs, as such operations are determined on a case-by-case basis each year, thus enabling potential LRFrs to ascertain eligibility for various USDA programs and benefits.²¹ Data from 2016 suggest that LRFrs accounted for about 7% of principal operator farm households. According to USDA, LRFrs are smaller, on average, than other farms.²² Available data on LRFrs may include SDFRs, BFRs, and VFRs, and therefore these data are not additive with those for other underserved producer groups.

Small Farms and Ranches

Some USDA programs and provisions directly limit support to small farms and ranches. Other programs explicitly include small producers in their lists of eligible entities. What constitutes a small farm or ranch is not consistently defined in either statute or regulation. Instead, definitions of small farming and ranching operations are variously defined by USDA for research and analysis purposes to determine how benefits are distributed. For example, USDA-reported agricultural

¹⁷ See USDA, Self-Determination Tool, <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>. For other related background, see CRS Report R47299, *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Who Is a Veteran?*

¹⁸ USDA, Producers with Military Service, *2017 Census of Agriculture Highlights*, ACH17-22/November 2020, <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2020/census-military-producers.pdf>. See also CRS In Focus IF11093, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Veteran Farmers and Ranchers*.

¹⁹ For example, see 7 C.F.R. §§1470.3, 1465.3, 760.1901.

²⁰ USDA’s Self-Determination Tool is available at <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

²¹ See USDA, Self-Determination Tool, <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

²² As reported by USDA, “Farm Household Income and Characteristics: Table 11: Characteristics of Principal Farm Operator Households, by Limited-Resource Farms, 2016,” <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-household-income-and-characteristics/>.

statistics collect data across broad economic class categories based on *farm sales* of agricultural products, and USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) often refers to small farms as those with annual gross cash farm income (GCFI) of \$250,000 or less.²³ Alternatively, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) farm typology bases size considerations on who owns the operation and annual GCFI. ERS defines *small family farms* as those with a GCFI of less than \$350,000.²⁴ Other farm size definitions, such as those in Small Business Administration (SBA) regulations, define small farms as those with annual receipts of \$2.25 million-\$22 million, depending on the type of operation (13 C.F.R. §121.201).

In addition, some USDA programs use terms or definitions that could be interpreted to encompass small farmers and ranchers. Examples include the term *family farm*, which does not specifically reference an operation's size.²⁵ Another example is the average \$900,000 adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation for payment eligibility that applies to most programs administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource and Conservation Service.²⁶

USDA Programs Supporting Underserved Producers

Table 1 and **Table 2** provide a summary of selected USDA programs and policies that appear in the *U.S. Code* that reference historically underserved and Native producer groups, respectively. Both tables provide a brief description of the program or policy, and identify the administering USDA agency or office following the program name. There may be overlap between **Table 1** and **Table 2**, as many tribal producers qualify under terms identified in **Table 1**. Search results are current through year-end 2023.²⁷ In some cases, although the law may contain the specific terms searched, USDA's internal priorities or its interpretation of the statutory language may affect services being provided to these producer groups. Describing these implementation differences falls outside the scope of this report.

Although these producer groups are as eligible for USDA programs as any other farmer or rancher, recent legislation and omnibus farm bills have provided targeted support for these underserved producer groups through permanently authorized programs. Ad hoc temporary pandemic-era funding that provided various support to underserved producer groups is not included.

²³ See USDA, *2022 Census of Agriculture*, Table 3, <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/>. Farm sales include the sales of crops and livestock, fees for delivering commodities under production contracts, government payments, and net change in Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) loans. See also USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, "Small and Family Farms," <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/topics/small-family-farms>.

²⁴ See Christine Whitt, Katherine Lacy, and Katherine Lim, *America's Farms and Ranches at a Glance: 2023 Edition*, EIB-263, USDA, December 2023. See also Tony Dorn, "Family Farms Continue to Power U.S. Agriculture," USDA ERS, <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2021/01/27/family-farms-continue-power-us-agriculture>. Gross cash farm income (GCFI) includes the farm producer's sales of crops and livestock, fees for delivering commodities under production contracts, government payments, and farm-related income.

²⁵ 7 U.S.C. 1922 related to USDA farm loans. For other related background on small farming operations in the context of USDA's Farm Credit System, see CRS Report R46768, *Agricultural Credit: Institutions and Issues*.

²⁶ For more background on adjusted gross income (AGI) limits, see CRS Report R46248, *U.S. Farm Programs: Eligibility and Payment Limits*. Other examples are Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm coverages under federal crop insurance programs, which are restricted to operations with less than \$17 million and \$350,000 in approved annual income, respectively.

²⁷ Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "Currency & Updating," <https://uscode.house.gov/currency/currency.shtml>.

SDFRs, BFRs, LRFrs, VFRs, and Small Farms and Ranches

Table 1 provides a listing of statutorily authorized programs and provisions that reference specific producer groups in the *U.S. Code*, including those who are beginning (B), socially disadvantaged (SD), limited resource (LR), veterans (V), underserved (U), historically underserved (HU), or considered to be small in size (S). Generally, these farmers and ranchers may be eligible for USDA programs available to all U.S. farmers and ranchers. The exclusion of a program from **Table 1** does not necessarily reflect a farmer or rancher’s ineligibility for a program, only that the statute makes no direct reference to these categories.

As previously discussed, the term *small* is frequently not defined in statute and is subject to interpretation. **Table 1** includes citations whose establishing statute references small farmers and ranchers and excludes citations involving a range of small businesses not directly engaged in agricultural production. Excluded citations include, but are not limited to, small food manufacturers,²⁸ small-scale extension services, small capital projects, small communities, small and emerging private business enterprises, small business investment companies, and small cooperative producers, among other related terms.²⁹ **Table 1** also excludes references in statute that invoke broad references to small operations as part of USDA’s broader programmatic objectives but do not clearly specify what constitutes a small operation. Accordingly, excluded are USDA research programs that broadly reference support for or analysis of small operations, among other producer groups and production types.³⁰ Similarly, **Table 1** excludes USDA marketing and promotion programs that invoke potential benefits to small-sized agricultural operations, such as those attributed to generic commodity promotion (e.g., 7 U.S.C. §7401(b)(10)) or promotion programs involving a specific agricultural commodity.³¹ Finally, **Table 1** covers support for domestic producers only and excludes USDA programs and any noted support for small-sized foreign operations. Also excluded are statutory citations for inactive programs or temporary programs in operation in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

²⁸ SBA regulations include size definitions for food and beverage manufacturers expressed in terms of the number of employees, ranging from 500 to 1,400 employees depending on the type of operation (13 C.F.R. 121.201).

²⁹ Such terms are often cited in 7 U.S.C. Chapter 50 (Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act programs) and 7 U.S.C. Chapter 31 (Rural Electrification Act programs), among other statutes.

³⁰ These include, for example, USDA research programs and initiatives that more broadly support marketing resources, education, and analysis (e.g., 7 U.S.C. §1632a, §2271 and §3121), advisory, partnerships and coordination (e.g., 7 U.S.C. §3124a), research, development, and technology transfer (e.g., 7 U.S.C. §§5925-5926, §6971 and §7313), and survey and data collection (e.g., 7 U.S.C. §2204h and §3003).

³¹ For example, soybeans (7 U.S.C. §6304(q)(1)(A)), pork (7 U.S.C. §4801(a)(1)(A)), dairy products (7 U.S.C. §4534(a)(2)(ii)), and honey (7 U.S.C. §4601(a)(5)), among other product groups that may invoke benefits to small and medium-sized producers as part of their statutory citation. For program examples, see USDA, “Research & Promotion Programs,” <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/research-promotion>.

Table I. Selected Programs and Policies Addressing Beginning, Veteran, Socially Disadvantaged, and Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers or Small Farms and Ranches

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(3)	B	Provides insurance products through the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) to indemnify producers against losses in yield, crop revenue, margin, and whole farm revenue, among other areas. Defines a beginning farmer or rancher (BFR) to mean “a farmer or rancher who has not actively operated and managed a farm or ranch with a bona fide insurable interest in a crop or livestock as an owner-operator, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper for more than 5 crop years, as determined by the Secretary.”
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(14)	V	For purposes of FCIP, defines a veteran farmer or rancher (VFR) to mean a farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined in 38 U.S.C. §101(10)) and has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 5 years, or who first obtained veteran status during the most recent 5-year period.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1507	B, V	Provides that USDA/FSA assist the Board of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) in sharing information on BFRs and VFRs, among other activities.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(a)(7)	U	For purposes of FCIP, defines an underserved producer to mean an individual (including a member of an Indian tribe) who is a BFR, VFR, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher (SDFR).
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(b)(5)(E)	B, LR, V	For purposes of FCIP, waives administrative fees for catastrophic risk protection (also known as CAT fees) for LRFRs, BFRs, and VFRs.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(e)(8)	B, V	Provides that, with certain exceptions, BFRs and VFRs shall receive a premium subsidy that is 10 percentage points greater than premium subsidy that would otherwise be available.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(g)(2)	B, V	For purposes of FCIP, provides that a BFR or VFR who was previously involved in a farming or ranching operation and meets certain requirements may obtain an assigned yield that is the higher of (1) the actual production history of the previous producer of the crop or livestock on the acreage if there are sufficient acceptable records or (2) 65% of the applicable transitional yield, unless the acceptable records warrant a higher yield. A transitional yield is an estimated yield calculated by RMA to be used when a producer has less than four consecutive crop years of actual or assigned yields.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(g)(4)(B)	B, V	For purposes of determining FCIP eligibility, BFRs and VFRs may replace historical yields that are eligible to be excluded with 80% of the applicable transitional yield. In contrast, other farmers may use only 60% of the applicable transitional yield.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1522(c) and 1522(d)	B, U, S	Provides that FCIC carry out research and development to maintain or improve existing policies or develop new policies to increase participation of “underserved agricultural commodities and areas.” Waives certain requirements for “small and beginning farmers” in some cases.
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1524	B, SD, V, U	In providing crop insurance education and awarding grants for risk management education, the Secretary of Agriculture shall place special emphasis on risk management strategies, education, and outreach specifically targeted at BFRs, VFRs, and SDFRs who are underserved by the FCIP, among other targeted groups.

Selected USDA Programs and Policies That Address Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Federal Crop Insurance (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1522(c)(7)	U	For purposes of Whole Farm Revenue Protection policies, a BFR is defined as not having actively operated or managed a farm or ranch with a bona fide insurable interest in a crop or livestock as an owner-operator, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper for more than 10 crop years.
Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §1627c	B, SD, V, U, S	Provides grants to support production of locally sourced agriculture and food products through the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program and the Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant Program. Provides priority to applications that benefit underserved communities and operators of small- and medium-sized farms and ranches structured as a family farm. Reserves 10% of available funds for BFRs, VFRs, and SDFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2003).
Agricultural Marketing Resource Center Pilot Project (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §1632a	B, V, U, S	Establishes a pilot project within LAMP to develop a resource center with electronic capabilities to coordinate and provide to independent producers and processors of value-added agricultural commodities and products of agricultural commodities information regarding research, business, legal, financial, or logistical assistance.
Real Estate Loans, Direct (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1922 (b)(1)	B, V	Provides that status as a BFR is one of several qualifying criteria for receiving a direct farm real estate loan. Allows USDA to waive or reduce the three-year experience requirement for beginning farmers under certain circumstances, including combinations of education, experience, or veteran status.
Conservation Loans, Both Direct and Guaranteed (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1924 (d) and (e)	B, SD	Specifies a priority for BFRs and SDFRs to receive direct conservation loans and guarantees (7 U.S.C. §1924(d)). For guaranteed loans, provides for a higher guarantee proportion of 90% for BFRs and SDFRs, rather than the general 80% guarantee limit (7 U.S.C. §1924(e)).
Real Estate Loans, Guaranteed (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1929(h)(6), (i) and (j)	B	Establishes an Agricultural Credit Insurance Fund. Allows a higher loan guarantee proportion of 95% for BFRs, rather than the general 90% guarantee limit. Allows USDA to coordinate with state-level programs for BFRs, including guaranteeing loans.
Assistance For Rural Entities (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1932(e)	SD	Provides grants to nonprofit institutions to establish and operate centers that facilitate the development of new rural cooperatives. If the total amount appropriated for grants exceeds \$7.5 million for a fiscal year, then 20% is reserved for grants for cooperative development centers, cooperatives, and groups of cooperatives that serve SDFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2003).
Low-Income Farm Ownership Loan Program; Eligibility; Repayment Requirements (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1934	S	Authorizes USDA to make and insure loans to farmers and ranchers who meet certain criteria, including "owners or operators of small or family farms (including new owners or operators)" and "farmers or ranchers with a low income," among other conditions.
Down Payment Loan Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1935	B, SD, V	Provides a down payment loan program as part of the farm real estate loan program for BFRs, VFRs, and SDFRs.
BFRs and SDFR Contract Land Sales Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1936	B, SD	Provides a loan guarantee program for BFRs and/or SDFRs that covers seller-financed land contracts, with USDA as the guarantor.
Relending Program to Resolve Ownership and Succession on Farmland (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1936c	B, SD, LR	Creates a relending program for farm ownership loans to assist heirs (via cooperatives, credit unions, and nonprofit organizations) with undivided ownership interests to resolve ownership and succession issues on land that has multiple owners.
Operating Loans, Direct (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1941 (c)(1)	B	Provides that status as a BFR is one of several qualifying criteria for receiving a direct farm operating loan.

Selected USDA Programs and Policies That Address Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Interest Rate on Operating Loans, Direct (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1946 (a)(2)	B, LR, V	Limits the interest rate charged on direct operating microloans to BFRs and VFRs, and “low-income, limited resource borrowers.”
Individual Development Accounts (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1983b	B	Establishes an individual development account program for BFRs (using a definition of low assets and either 80% of median state income or 200% of poverty), offering matching contributions via a USDA grant to organizations that deliver a savings account program for certain farming purposes.
Sale of USDA-Acquired Property (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1985 (c)(1)(B), (c)(5)(B)	B, SD	Gives first priority, for the first 135 days, to BFRs and SDFRs when USDA sells or leases property that is acquired, usually from foreclosure on other loans.
Definitions (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1991(a)(11)	B	For purposes of farm credit, defines the term “qualified” BFR to mean an applicant who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years, among other qualifying conditions.
Loan Authorization Amounts (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1994 (b)(2), and (d)	B, LR	Reserves proportions of direct and guaranteed real estate and operating loans for BFRs for a period of each fiscal year: 75% of direct real estate, 50% of direct operating loans, 40% of guaranteed loans, and two-thirds of the down payment loan program, until April or September of the fiscal year, depending on the program (7 U.S.C. §1994(b)(2)). Requires at least 25% of the farm loan program to be for “low-income, limited resource borrowers” (7 U.S.C. §1994(d)).
Interest Rate Reduction Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1999 (e)(2)(B)	B, V	Reserves 15% of funding for reduced-interest guaranteed loans for BFRs and VFRs for the first five months of the fiscal year.
Homestead Protection (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2000 (c)(4)(B)	SD	Allows SDFRs and their immediate families to have a right of first refusal at any time to reacquire at market payment rates property that USDA has repossessed.
Target Participation Rates (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2003	SD	Directs USDA to establish county-level target participation rates and to reserve farm loan funding for SDFRs. SDFRs are defined as people belonging to a “socially disadvantaged group,” to mean “a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.” Differs from SDFR definitions at 7 U.S.C. §2279 in that it includes White, non-Hispanic women.
Reports on Land Access and Ownership (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2004i	B, SD	Requires USDA to submit to Congress a report on land access and farmland ownership by BFRs and SDFRs, and to address regulatory, operational, or statutory changes that would improve these individuals’ ability to acquire or access farmland.
Market Placement (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2006d	B	Requires USDA to establish a market placement program for qualified BFRs and other farm loan borrowers that have a reasonable chance of qualifying for commercial credit with a guarantee.
Reporting (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2008x	B, SD, U	Directs USDA to report to Congress annually with data summarizing demographic information about farm loans and borrowers (including age, race, ethnicity, and gender), including assessments of loans made and guaranteed compared with target participation among beginning and socially disadvantaged borrowers by state. Directs USDA to comprehensively evaluate and identify trends and actions (every five years) to improve the program for underserved producers.
SDFRs; Qualified BFRs (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §2008b	B, SD	Allows loan guarantees of 95% of the principal for BFRs and SDFRs.

Selected USDA Programs and Policies That Address Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) (USDA/OPPE, USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §2279	B, SD, V	Provides outreach and competitive grants to support training, education, outreach, and technical assistance of SDFRs, BFRs, and VFRs through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant Program (BFRDGP) and the Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (aka 2501 Program). Differs from SDFR definitions at 7 U.S.C. §2003(e) in that it excludes White, non-Hispanic women. Defines a BFR as a person who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years (thus differing from BFR definitions at 7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(3)). Defines a VFR as a person who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined at 38 U.S.C. §101(10)) and who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years (differing from definitions at 7 U.S.C. §1502(b)(14)). Reserves 5% of available funds under BFRDGP for LRFRs and SDFRs that are BFRs. Reserves 5% of available funds under BFRDGP for VFRs.
Transparency/Accountability for SDFRs (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §2279-1 et seq.	SD	Requires the compilation and disclosure of data related to SDFR participation in USDA programs.
Fair and Equitable Treatment of SDFRs (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §2279a et seq.	SD	Authorizes changes to farm program and loan administration in favor of socially disadvantaged producers and requires additional reporting. Defines a socially disadvantaged producer as “a producer who is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.”
Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grants (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §3157	B, SD, V	Provides grants to promote research in food, agriculture, and related areas. Priority areas include research addressing “barriers and bridges to entry and farm viability for young, beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran, and immigrant farmers and ranchers, including farm succession, transition, transfer, entry, and profitability issues.”
Next Generation Agriculture Technology Challenge (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §3158	B	Establishes a next-generation agriculture technology challenge competition to incentivize the development of innovative mobile technology that removes barriers to entry in the marketplace for BFRs.
Study of animal care delivery system (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §3193	LR, S	Directs USDA to commission National Academy of Sciences study of the delivery system used to provide farmers, including small and limited resource farmers, and ranchers with animal care and veterinary medical services, including animal drugs.
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (SARE) (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5821	LR, S	Supports research and education programs concerning integrated resource management and integrated crop management, including the facilitation and adoption of whole-farm integrated crop and livestock management systems through demonstration projects on individual farms, including small and limited resource farms.
National Organic Program, Compliance Requirements (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §6505(d)	S	Establishes compliance requirements for labeling and selling an agricultural product as organically produced if such product is produced and handled in accordance with USDA regulations. Exempts small producers defined as “persons who sell no more than \$5,000 annually in value of agricultural products.”
Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Program (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6712	B, SD, LR, V	Defines term used to carry out the voluntary program that establishes protocols, qualifications, and registration process for private-sector carbon markets that involve agriculture and forestry participants. Establishes certain assistance for BFRs, VFRs, SDFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2003), and LRFRs (to have the meaning at 7 C.F.R. §1470.3). Establishes advisory council membership to include, among others, BFR, SDFR, LRFR, and VFR participants.
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6934	B, LR, SD, V, S	Directs USDA to establish the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement to improve access of department programs and improve the viability of small farms and ranches, BFRs, VFRs, SDFRs (defined at 7 U.S.C. §2279(a)), and LRFRs.

Selected USDA Programs and Policies That Address Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordination (USDA/OPPE)	7 U.S.C. §6934a	B	Directs USDA to establish BFR coordinators, in consultation with state food and agriculture councils and directors of state offices. Each state has a BFR coordinator to support training and outreach, as administered through the USDA Service Centers. BFRs have the meaning as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2279(a).
Agricultural Youth Organization Coordinator (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6934b	B	Establishes an Agricultural Youth Organization Coordinator position at USDA to, among other things, provide information and resources to youth involved in food and agriculture organizations, with particular emphasis on BFR programs.
Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6919	V, S	Establishes a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison position at USDA and provides for related contracting and cooperative agreements. Provides that the liaison may enter into contracts or cooperative agreements to conduct “regional research on the profitability of small farms,” among other research.
Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §7333(b)(4), (k)(2) and (l)(3)	B, SD, LR, V, S	Offers payments to producers of eligible crops to protect against low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting due to a natural disaster. Requires a streamlined submission of records and acreage reports for, among other topics, “other small-scale production systems.” Waives the service fee and allows for reduced premium for additional coverage for LRFRs, BFRs, SDFRs, and VFRs.
Food Safety Outreach Program (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §7625	B, SD, V, S	Provides competitive grants giving priority to projects that target small- and medium-sized farms, BFRs, VFRs, SDFRs, and small-sized processors, or fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers. Enacted as part of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (P.L. 111-353, §209), amending the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-185).
Biomass Crop Assistance Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §8111	B, SD	Provides financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forestland who wish to establish, produce, and deliver biomass feedstocks. In selecting project areas, the Secretary of Agriculture shall consider the participation rate of BFRs or SDFRs.
Payment Acres (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9014(d)(2)	B, SD, LR, V	Provides an exception for SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFRs with less than 10 base acres that would otherwise be prohibited for receiving price loss coverage payments or agriculture risk coverage payments.
Administrative Fee for Dairy Operations in Dairy Margin Coverage (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9054(c)(4)	B, SD, LR, V	Exempts SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFRs from the \$100 administrative fee required to participate in the Dairy Margin Coverage program that supports milk producers when the difference between feed costs and milk prices dropped below a certain level. Enacted as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-123, §60101(b)(2)).
Supplemental Agriculture Disaster Assistance (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9081(a)(1)	B, SD, LR, V	For the purposes of USDA disaster programs, defines a “covered producer” as an SDFR, BFR, VFR, and LRFR. This definition applies to the Livestock Indemnity Payments; the Livestock Forage Disaster Program; the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program; and the Tree Assistance Program.
Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9081(d)(4)	B, SD, LR, V	Provides assistance to producers who have incurred catastrophic losses of production and infrastructure because of natural disasters. Provides reimbursement of 90% of the cost for covered losses to SDFRs, BFRs, and LRFRs (“as determined by the Secretary”) and VFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2279(a)).
Tree Assistance Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9081(e)(5)	B, V	Provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines damaged by natural disasters. BFRs and VFRs may be eligible for increased reimbursement rates for replanting and rehabilitation costs.
Young, Beginning, and Small Farmers and Ranchers (FCS)	12 U.S.C. §2207	B, S	Within the Farm Credit System (FCS), establishes a lending program (focus) to serve and support young, beginning, and small (YBS) farmers and ranchers, including documenting and reporting program achievements.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Powers and Duties (FCA)	12 U.S.C. §2252	B, S	Requires the Farm Credit Administration (FCA) to publish annual reports that summarize FCS lending to YBS farmers and ranchers.
Standards for Qualified Loans (Farmer Mac)	12 U.S.C. §2279aa–8	S	Provides that Farmer Mac shall “not discriminate against small originators or small agricultural mortgage loans that are at least \$50,000.” Requires Farmer Mac to “promote and encourage the inclusion of qualified loans for small farms and family farmers in the agricultural mortgage secondary market.”
State, County, and Area Committees (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §590h(b)(5)(B) and (b)(5)(F)	SD, S	Establishes USDA/FSA state, county, area, and local committees, including required representation levels for consolidated committees and outreach efforts for SDFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2003). Requires that USDA in carrying out the committee requirements, among other actions, “protect the interests of small producers.”
Emergency Conservation Program (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §2202a(b)	B, SD, LR	Provides emergency funding to producers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters. Cost-share rates are increased for LRFrs, SDFRs and BFRs.
Conservation Definitions (USDA/NRCS, USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3801(2) and (23)	B, SD	Establishes definitions related to all conservation programs under Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198) that provide conservation financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers, including BFRs and SDFRs (as defined at 7 U.S.C. §2279).
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Soil Health and Income Protection Pilot Program (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3831 c(b)(3)(E)	B, LR, SD, V	CRP provides annual rental payments to producers to replace crops on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land with long-term resource-conserving plantings. This pilot program provides an increased payment rate for establishing cover crops and higher annual rental rates for SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFrs.
CRP, Duties of the Secretary (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3833(b)(5)	B	Allows for the grazing of CRP land by BFRs without the reduction of the rental rate if grazed outside of the primary nesting season.
CRP Contracts (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3835(c)(1)(B)(iii)	B, SD	Allows for modification of existing CRP contracts to facilitate the transfer of land from retiring farmers and ranchers to BFRs and SDFRs and for its return to production.
CRP Transition Incentive Program (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3835(f)	B, SD, V	Provides payments to existing CRP contract holders who voluntarily transfer land to a BFR, VFR, or SDFR to return land to production. Provides priority enrollment for such land to participate in other conservation programs.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Establishment, Administration (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839aa-2(d)(4)(A)-(B)	B, SD, LR, V	Provides assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns. Establishes additional support for SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFrs, who may receive up to 90%, and not less 25%, of the applicable cost to implement conservation practices “associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training,” and who may receive up to 50% of the estimated payment in advance of the completion of an approved practice for materials and contracting.
CRP, Commodity Credit Corporation (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3841(a)(1)(B)	B, SD, V	Allocates \$50 million to the CRP Transition Incentive Program, which facilitates the transfer of CRP land from existing CRP contract holders to a BFR, VFR, or SDFR. Limits outreach and technical assistance to not more than \$5 million.
EQIP and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3841(h)	B, SD, V	Allocates 5% of funding for both programs to BFRs, and another 5% to SDFRs. Requires preference be given to veterans.
Conservation Programs, Administrative Requirements (USDA/NRCS, USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3844(a)	B, SD, LR, V	Authorizes incentives to encourage participation SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFrs when administering USDA conservation programs.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Type	Description
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3871e(d)	B, SD, LR, V, HU	Provides financial and technical assistance for state, multistate, or watershed-scale agricultural conservation projects. Directs USDA and partners to conduct outreach under the program to historically underserved producers, which are defined as SDFRs, BFRs, VFRs, and LRFRs.
Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program (USDA/FSIS)	21 U.S.C. §683(b)(2); 21 U.S.C. §472(b)(2)	S	For participating states, allows small state-inspected meat and poultry processors to ship products across state lines. Limited to processors with 25 or fewer employees.

Sources: Compiled by CRS from a search of the *U.S. Code* referencing search terms related to socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers (SDFRs), new or beginning farmers or ranchers (BFRs), veteran farmers or ranchers (VFRs), limited resource farmers and ranchers (LRFRs), small-sized producers (except for certain operations, as discussed in “Small Farms and Ranches”), and underserved or historically underserved farmers or ranchers. Text in quotations is statutory language.

Notes: NA = Not applicable. Excludes supplemental, temporary, and/or ad hoc non-farm bill assistance, such as provisions included in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA, P.L. 117-7), FY2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-260), and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES, P.L. 116-136). Excludes code citations that reference these entities within programs and policies that have been repealed or superseded.

Group Abbreviations: B = Beginning; LR = Limited Resource; SD = Socially Disadvantaged; V = Veteran; U = Underserved; S = Small; and HU = Historically Underserved. Agency and office abbreviations: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) includes Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Departmental Administration (DA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Farm Credit System (FCS), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Forest Service (FS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), Rural Development (RD), and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Tribal and Indigenous Farmers and Ranchers

Table 2 provides a listing of programs and provisions that specifically address Indian tribes, tribal governments, and other tribal entities in their authorizing federal statutes or accompanying statutory notes.³² The list was derived from a search of the *U.S. Code* referencing search terms including Indian tribe, tribal groups, Indian tribal organizations, Alaska Native, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian native, Native American, American Indian, and Underserved Trust Areas.³³ The list includes statutes or reference text that may be relevant to a program’s authorizing statute or that further clarify the specification of Indian tribes in the statute. Other program and policy information is identified in USDA’s *Resource Guide for American Indians & Alaska Natives, 2022*,³⁴ and the University of Arkansas Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative.³⁵

³² Many of the federal farm programs and policies identified use the definition of Indian tribe provided in the ISDEAA (P.L. 93-638, 25 U.S.C. §5304): “Indian tribe” or “Indian Tribe” means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (P.L. 92-203, 43 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.), which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

³³ Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives may also be eligible for some programs designated for “Native Americans,” depending on the statutory language and context.

³⁴ Updated in 2022. Available at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-resource-guide-american-indians-alaska-natives.pdf>.

³⁵ Steven Garasky et al., *Feasibility of Tribal Administration of Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs*, prepared by IMPAQ International for USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, July 2016, p. 4.

Table 2 includes programs and policies administered by USDA that pertain to Indian tribes but are not necessarily about farmers (e.g., rural development, nutrition).

In some cases, federally recognized Indian tribes are directly eligible for federal programs.³⁶ In general, tribal and Indigenous producers may qualify for federal farm programs along with all other eligible producers, while also qualifying for programs available to residents living in rural areas. Similarly, individual tribal members that meet eligibility rules for certain programs, such as federal nutrition assistance programs, receive benefits as other eligible citizens do. Non-federally recognized tribes and other Indigenous groups may also be eligible for some federal programs. In some cases, state-recognized tribes or other Indigenous communities and producers might not be explicitly listed as eligible entities in statute but might satisfy the requirements for other listed eligible entities, or they might be eligible for farm programs based on USDA’s interpretation of statutory language or its internal priorities in providing service to Indian tribes and Indigenous producers. For example, some statutory definitions of Indian tribe include Alaska Native Corporations.³⁷ Native Hawaiians may also be eligible for certain programs. In addition, authorized tribal organizations, as defined at 25 U.S.C. §5304(l), may be eligible to apply for some federal programs. In addition, Indian tribes or other Indigenous groups may also be recognized by state governments.³⁸

Many Indian tribes and individual tribal members live on tribal lands, which may qualify them for specific federal programs. There are several types of tribal lands, including trust, restricted fee, allotted, and privately owned (fee) lands.³⁹ Tribal reservations are lands reserved for an Indian tribe under treaty, statute, or other agreement. Reservations can include a mix of tribal land types. In Alaska, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA, 43 U.S.C. §§1601 et seq.) divided the state into 12 geographic regions and established Alaska Native Corporations that manage land distributed under ANCSA.⁴⁰ **Table 2** generally excludes programs and policies addressing Indian tribes within executive branch agencies other than USDA and may exclude citations in other *U.S. Code* titles (e.g., Title 25, Chapter 46, Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance).

Table 2. Selected Programs and Policies Addressing Tribal and Indigenous Farmers and Ranchers, Rural Development, and Nutrition Access

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Powers of Secretary of Agriculture (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §178g	Provides federal agencies may enter into contracts with any state or public agency for research or economic development. References in text include the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA; P.L. 93-638, 25 U.S.C. §5304).

³⁶ A federally recognized Indian tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, which makes the entity eligible for certain programs and services.

³⁷ For example, the ISDEAA’s (P.L. 93-638, 25 U.S.C. §5304) definition of “Indian tribe” has been interpreted to include Alaska Native Corporations (see *Yellen v. Chehalis*, 594 U.S. ____ (2021)).

³⁸ For a listing of state recognized tribes, see the National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/quad-caucus/state-recognition-of-american-indian-tribes>.

³⁹ *Trust lands* are lands or interests in land owned by a federally recognized tribe or individual tribal member that are held in trust by the federal government. *Restricted fee lands* are lands restricted from being sold or transferred. *Allotted lands or allotments* were established by the General Allotment Act of 1887, which divided tribal reservations into parcels of 40-160 acres and allotted the parcels to individual tribal members. For information on tribal lands, see CRS Report R46647, *Tribal Land and Ownership Statuses: Overview and Selected Issues for Congress*.

⁴⁰ For more information on Alaska Native Corporations, see CRS Report R46997, *Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress*.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Equity in Educational Land Grant Status Act (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §301	Defines 36 named “1994 Institutions,” a group of tribal colleges and universities considered land-grant colleges in accordance with the Morrill Act of 1862 (12 Stat. 503), except for how they are funded. Reauthorizes 1994 Institution endowment funding, capacity-building grants, and research grants.
Smith-Lever Community Extension Program (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §343	Includes 1994 Institutions (which are all tribal colleges) as eligible for competitive grant funding programs for agricultural extension under the Smith-Lever Act (38 Stat. 373); the Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) program and the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP).
Rural Electrification and Telephone Service (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §913	Chapter definitions include the term “Indian tribes,” defined as in 25 U.S.C. §5304. The definitions apply to Rural Utilities Service electrical programs.
Expansion of 911 access (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §940e	Allows USDA to make loans for facilities and equipment to expand or improve 911 access in rural areas. Indian tribes are eligible entities to receive grants. An “Indian tribe” is defined as in 25 U.S.C. §5304.
Precision Agriculture Connectivity (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §901	Creates a task force (led by the Federal Communications Commission, FCC) with a position for an agriculture producer representing tribal agriculture to look at gaps in broadband connectivity for precision agriculture.
Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §936f	Provides USDA the discretion to adjust or waive program requirements for certain Rural Utilities Service programs for applications with projects that serve communities in substantially underserved trust areas, including land held in trust by the United States for Native Americans. These can be applications from tribal entities or non-tribal entities. USDA may take actions such as waiving nonduplication restrictions, matching requirements, or credit support requirements; giving the highest priority funding to designated projects in substantially underserved trust areas; or making financing available with an interest rate as low as 2% and with extended repayment terms.
Access to Broadband Telecommunications Services in Rural Areas (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §950bb	Provides that USDA may make loans, loan guarantees, and grants to provide funds for broadband service in rural areas. Indian tribes are listed among the eligible borrowers. Directs USDA to prioritize applications that were developed in participation of two or more stakeholders, including “tribal governments.”
Community Connect Grant Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §950bb-3	Authorizes USDA to establish a program to provide grants to eligible entities to finance broadband transmission in rural areas. “An Indian tribe or tribal organization” is an eligible applicant. An “Indian tribe” is defined as in 25 U.S.C. §5304.
Rural Broadband Integration Working Group (USDA/RD)	NA	Establishes a Rural Broadband Integration Working Group to consult with stakeholders, including “tribal governments,” to identify and assess possible actions relating to barriers and opportunities for broadband deployment in rural areas.
Federal Crop Insurance Program (USDA/RMA)	7 U.S.C. §1508(a)(7)	Establishes a definition of <i>underserved producer</i> to mean “an individual (including a member of an Indian Tribe)” that is an SDFR, BFR, or VFR. Requires USDA to review and report on whether there is adequate federal crop insurance coverage and make recommendations to increase participation of underserved producers.
National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §1627b	Requires that USDA establish a National Sheep Industry Improvement Center. Listed eligible entities include Indian tribes.
Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §1627c	Combines and expands the Farmers’ Market and Local Food Promotion Program and the Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants to create LAMP with expanded funding and administrative functions. Specifies that “Tribal governments” are eligible under the program.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Hemp Production Program (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §1639o-q	Directs USDA to establish a national regulatory framework for U.S. hemp cultivation that authorizes a state or tribal government to develop and regulate hemp production in compliance with USDA regulation. Provides that no state or Indian tribe may prohibit the transportation or shipment through its territory of hemp or hemp products, if produced in accordance with an approved state or tribal plan. "Indian tribe" is defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304. The term "tribal government" means the governing body of an Indian tribe.
Water and Waste Facility Loans and Grants (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1926	Provides that USDA may make or insure loans to provide for the application or establishment of soil conservation practices; shifts in land use; the conservation, development, use, and control of water; and the installation or improvement of drainage or waste disposal facilities, recreational developments, and essential community facilities. "Indian tribes on federal and state reservations and other federally recognized Indian tribes" are listed as eligible applicants.
Water and Waste Facility Loans and Grants to Alleviate Health Risks (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1926c	Provides that USDA may make or insure loans and make grants to provide water and waste facilities to communities whose residents face significant health risks, as determined by USDA. "Indian tribes on federal and state reservations and other federally recognized Indian tribes" are listed as eligible applicants.
Tribal College and University Essential Community Facilities (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1926(a)(2)5)	Provides that USDA may make grants to a "Tribal College or University," as defined in 20 U.S.C. §1059c, to develop Tribal College or University essential community facilities in rural areas. 20 U.S.C. §1059c defines a "Tribal College or University" as "an institution that a) qualifies for funding under the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities Assistance Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. §§1801 et seq.) or the Navajo Community College Act (25 U.S.C. §640a note); or b) is cited in section 532 of the equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. §301 note)."
Water Systems for rural and Native villages in Alaska (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1926d	Provides that USDA may make grants for the development and construction of water and wastewater systems to improve the health and sanitation conditions in Alaska Native villages.
Water and Waste Disposal Facility Loans; Community Facility Loans (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1927	Requires that the interest rate on real estate loans to public bodies, including "Indian tribes on federal and state reservations and other federally recognized Indian tribal groups," for water and waste disposal facilities and community facilities must follow certain rules (markup from market rate, subject to a maximum-allowed rate).
Farm Operating Loans (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1929(h)(7)	Establishes an Agricultural Credit Insurance Fund. Allows a higher loan guarantee proportion of 95% for farm operations on tribal lands, rather than the general 90% guarantee limit.
Assistance for Rural Entities (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1932	Provides for loan eligibility for "Indian tribes on federal and state reservations or other federally recognized Indian tribal groups" among a list of public, private, or cooperative organizations. "Indian tribes" are eligible for rural business development grants, along with government entities and nonprofit entities.
Intermediary Relending Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1936b	Provides for loans and loan guarantees to eligible entities to relend for projects that promote community development, establish new business, support microlending programs, and create or retain employment opportunities in rural areas. "Indian tribes" are eligible applicants.
Farm Operating Loans (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1941	Waives term limits (that otherwise would prevent loans of more than six years) on direct farm operating loans for producers whose farms are on tribal land.
Farm Loan Program, Borrowers Rights (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §1985(e)	Protects the rights of the Indian tribe if USDA acquires property on an Indian tribe's reservation because of a bankruptcy or loan default. Requires that USDA sell the acquired property back to either the Indian tribe, an Indian corporate entity, or members of the tribe, or transfer the property to the Department of the Interior (DOI) to be held in trust for the benefit of the tribe.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Loan Program, Administrative Provisions (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §1992	Requires USDA to make loans only to entities that cannot qualify for a loan elsewhere, but provides an exception that allows USDA to make loans to public bodies, including “Indian tribes on federal and state reservations or other federally recognized Indian tribal groups,” without proving that credit is unavailable.
Rural Business-Cooperative Service programs technical assistance and training (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2008c	Authorizes USDA to make grants for the purpose of providing or obtaining technical assistance and training to support funding applications for USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service programs. “Federally recognized Indian tribes” are eligible applicants.
Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2008s	Authorizes certain entities to receive funds as a microenterprise development organization. Entities include “an Indian tribe, the tribal government of which certifies to the Secretary that I) no microenterprise development organization serves the Indian tribe, and II) no rural microentrepreneur assistance program exists under the jurisdiction of the Indian tribe.” “Indian tribe” is defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304.
Strategic economic and community development (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2008v	Directs USDA to provide assistance to rural communities in developing strategic community investment plans and to give priority for certain rural development programs to applications that support the implementation of a strategic community investment plan. States that have strategic community investment plans shall include investment from strategic partners such as “Indian tribes.” The Secretary of Agriculture is directed to coordinate with “Indian tribes” and other partners to develop strategic community investment plans.
Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2008w	Directs USDA to provide grants to eligible entities to establish job accelerators that improve the ability of distressed rural communities to create high-wage jobs and help communities identify and maximize local assets and connect to regional opportunities, networks, and industry clusters. Includes “Indian tribes” as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304 and “a consortium of Indian tribes” as eligible lead applicants for a rural jobs accelerator partnership.
Rural Community Advancement Program, Strategic Plans (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2009c	Requires USDA to direct each of the Directors of Rural Economic and Community Development State Offices to prepare a strategic plan for each “federally recognized Indian tribe” for the delivery of financial assistance under the Rural Community Advancement Program.
Rural Business Investment Program, Definitions (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2009cc	Authorizes the Rural Business Investment Program to include a “for-profit or nonprofit business controlled by an Indian tribe on a federal or state reservation or other federally recognized Indian tribal group” as a potential rural business company for investment.
Definitions (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other programs authorized by the Food and Nutrition Act) (USDA/FNS)	7 U.S.C. §2012	Defines “state agency” for purposes of Food and Nutrition Act programs to include “the tribal organization of an Indian tribe determined by the Secretary to be capable of effectively administering a food distribution program” under 7 U.S.C. §2013(b) or a supplemental nutrition assistance program under 7 U.S.C. §2020(d). Defines “state” to include “the reservations of an Indian tribe whose tribal organization meets the requirements of this Act for participation as a state agency.” Defines “reservation” and “tribal organization.”
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) (USDA/FNS)	7 U.S.C. §2013(b)	Establishes a food distribution program for households on Indian reservations, and authorizes a fund for traditional and locally grown food. (The vast majority of FDPIR’s policies, including eligibility rules, are in regulation and not in statute.) The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334, §4003(a)) and the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, §4004(a)) reauthorized the locally grown food fund. P.L. 115-334 increased funding for tribes’ administrative costs and authorized a demonstration project (7 U.S.C. §2020(d)).

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Feasibility Study; Demonstration Project for Indian Tribes (USDA/FNS)	Not codified, available in notes of 7 U.S.C. §2013	The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, §4004) requires USDA to conduct a feasibility study of tribal administration of federal food assistance programs (see Steven Garasky et al., <i>Feasibility of Tribal Administration of Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs</i> , prepared by IMPAQ International for USDA/FNS, July 2016, p. 4) and authorizes, subject to appropriations, a traditional and local foods demonstration project.
Demonstration Project for Tribal Organizations	Not codified, available in notes of 7 U.S.C. §2013	The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334, §4003(b)) authorizes USDA to develop a demonstration project for one or more tribal organizations to procure foods for FDIPIR packages under ISDEAA “638 contracts” (i.e., Indian tribes may contract with USDA to purchase foods with federal funds instead of only distributing federally purchased foods).
SNAP, Issuance and Use of Program Benefits (USDA/FNS)	7 U.S.C. §2016(g)	Requires a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) state agency, if requested by a tribal organization, to stagger the issuance of benefits for eligible households on reservations.
SNAP, Administration (USDA/FNS)	7 U.S.C. §2020(d)	Allows Indian tribes to administer SNAP under certain circumstances (i.e., USDA must find that the state agency has failed to administer the program properly and that the Indian tribe is capable of administering SNAP as a state agency). A state agency that operates SNAP on all or part of an Indian reservation is required to consult with the tribal organization about the relevant portion of the SNAP state plan.
Community Food Projects (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §2034	“[T]ribal organization” is listed as an eligible entity for this competitive grant program.
Prohibition on Slaughter of Dogs and Cats for Human Consumption (USDA/FSIS)	7 U.S.C. §2160	Prohibits the slaughter/transportation of dogs and cats for the purpose of human consumption, with a religious ceremony exception provided for Indian tribes.
Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2204b-3	Establishes a Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development to enhance and improve coordination of federal investments in rural communities. Directs the Council to coordinate and increase the effectiveness of engagement with rural stakeholders, including “tribal governments.”
Water Management for Rural Areas (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2204c	Provides that USDA directly or in coordination with an “Indian tribe” or other entities to assist rural areas in making better and more efficient use of water resources.
Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) (USDA/OPPE and USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §2279	Combines and expands the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant Program and the Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers. Authorizes competitive grants to support training, education, outreach, and technical assistance. Eligible entities include Indian tribes (as defined at 25 U.S.C. §5304), Indian tribal community colleges and Alaska Native cooperative colleges, and national tribal organizations that have demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services to SDFRs in a region.
Rural Firefighters and Emergency Medical Service Assistance Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2655	Authorizes USDA to award grants to eligible entities to provide for improved emergency medical services in rural areas. “Indian tribes,” as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304, are among those eligible to receive a grant.
Rural Development and Small Farm Research and Education (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §§2661 and 2662	Authorizes rural development extension programs, research, and special grants to address problems and needs in rural development. “Indian tribes on federal and state reservations or other federally recognized Indian tribal groups,” among others, are eligible to participate.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Establishment of technical assistance program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §2671	Directs USDA, in coordination with USDA’s Office of Tribal Relations, to provide technical assistance to improve access by “tribal entities” to USDA Rural Development programs. The technical assistance is to address the “unique challenge of tribal governments, tribal producers, tribal businesses, tribal business entities, and tribally designated housing entities in accessing Department of Agriculture-supported rural infrastructure, rural cooperative development, rural business and industry, rural housing, and other rural development activities.”
Education Grants to Alaska Native Serving Institutions and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §3156	Authorizes USDA to make competitive grants to Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian serving institutions for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the ability of Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian serving institutions to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs.
New Beginning for Tribal Students (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §3222e	Authorizes a competitive grant program for tribal students at land-grant colleges. Land-grant colleges may apply for grants, with 100% matching funds requirement, to support tribal students through recruiting, tuition and fees, tutoring, counseling, and other services.
Rangeland Management on Indian Land (DOI/BIA)	25 U.S.C. §3711	Provides for management of Indian tribal agricultural lands and for the development and implementation of an Indian agriculture resource management and monitoring plan.
International Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Partnerships (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §3292	Promotes coordination and cooperation of U.S. land-grant and other institutions (including 1994 tribal colleges) with partner institutions in developing countries, to build capacity and strengthen agricultural research, teaching, and extension. Establishes NIFA internship and fellowship programs for students from the U.S. institutions to be placed, or study, in developing countries.
National Genetic Resources Program (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5843	Adds a 1994 tribal college representative (along with other new additions) to the National Genetic Resources Advisory Committee, which advises and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and Director of the National Genetic Resources Program.
Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5936	Authorizes competitive grants, in coordination with HHS, to designated eligible entities, which include Indian tribes. Authorizes training and workshops for farmers and ranchers, and authorizes the Network to contract with community-based direct service organizations.
Foreign Trade Missions (USDA/FAS)	7 U.S.C. §5608	Requires (1) USDA to support tribal representation on trade missions and (2) the inclusion of tribal agricultural and food products in federal trade-related activities.
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5801 et seq.	Provides competitive grants on projects that promote a range of sustainable agriculture practices. Definitions include Indian tribes (7 U.S.C. §5801(b)(7)).
Reservation Extension Agents (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5930	Establishes extension education programs within tribal jurisdictions, including Indian reservations.
Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §5936a	Authorizes USDA to make grants to state departments of agriculture (or such equivalent department) to expand or sustain stress assistance programs for individuals who are engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations. Provides that USDA may issue guidance to encourage state departments of agriculture to use funds to support programs that are operated by Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304) and also state cooperative extension services and nongovernmental organizations.
Pecan Promotion and Research (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §6001 et seq.	Provides for the creation of the Pecan Promotion and Research program. As part of the congressional findings and declaration of policy, the provision states the importance of pecans as a Native American crop.

Selected USDA Programs and Policies That Address Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Office of Tribal Relations, Tribal Advisory Committee (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6921	Requires the Secretary to maintain an Office of Tribal Relations within the Office of the Secretary to advise the Secretary on policies related to Indian tribes and carry out such other functions as the Secretary considers appropriate. Creates a new Tribal Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Secretary of Agriculture on tribal-related issues and policies throughout the department.
Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and Advisory Committee (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6923	Establishes the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and Advisory Committee. Specified that “tribal governments” are among the eligible entities for grants under the office. Tribal government is not further defined.
Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (USDA/OPPE)	7 U.S.C. §6934	Changes the name of the Office of Advocacy and Outreach to the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE); there is a specific reference to tribal producers, as the SDFR definition includes tribal producers. Tribal producers are included in the program under the definition of SDFR.
Rural Health Liaison (USDA/DA)	7 U.S.C. §6946	Establishes a Rural Health Liaison position to work in consultation with HHS regarding the integration of USDA and HHS programs to support rural health, including outreach to tribal governments, on the availability of grants, information, and programs.
The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (USDA/FNS, USDA/NIFA)	7 U.S.C. §7517	“Tribal agency” is listed as an eligible entity for this competitive grant program. (Tribal agency is not further defined.) The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334, §4205) reauthorized the program, including renaming it in memory of Gus Schumacher (previously, it was named the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program), increasing funding, and including a carve-out for produce prescription programs. Regarding produce prescription programs, USDA may allow a tribal agency to use funds “provided to the Tribe through a Federal agency or other Federal benefit” to satisfy all of part or the nonfederal matching requirement.
Micro-Grants for Food Security (USDA/AMS)	7 U.S.C. §7518	Provides money to eligible states to award grants of up to \$5,000 to individuals and up to \$10,000 to eligible entities, including Indian tribes and tribal organizations, for small-scale gardening, herding, and livestock operations directed to food insecure communities. Eligible states and territories include Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Palau, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
Wood Innovation Grant program (USDA/FS)	7 U.S.C. §7655d	Authorizes 50% cost-share grants to eligible entities to advance the use of innovative wood products to expand and accelerate wood energy and wood product markets. Indian tribes are included in the definition of “eligible entity.”
Noxious Weed Control and Eradication (USDA/APHIS)	7 U.S.C. §§7781-7784	Authorizes USDA to establish a program to provide financial and technical assistance to control or eradicate noxious weeds. Gives priority to projects that maximize the involvement of state and local governments and, where applicable, Indian tribes (as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304).
Definitions (Renewable Energy Research and Development) (USDA, EPA)	7 U.S.C. §8101	For the purposes of USDA Renewable Energy Research and Development programs, defines (1) Indian tribe in accordance with 25 U.S.C. §5304 and (2) renewable biomass to include, in part, any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis from nonfederal land or land belonging to an individual tribal member or Indian tribe.
Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance Program (USDA/RD)	7 U.S.C. §8103	Authorizes the development of new and emerging technologies for advanced biofuels, renewable chemicals, and biobased product manufacturing. Eligible entities include an “Indian tribe.”
Biomass Crop Assistance Program (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §8111	Authorizes the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). Defines eligible material to include material collected or harvested by the eligible material owner directly from land owned by an individual tribal member or Indian tribe.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Animal Health Protection (USDA/APHIS)	7 U.S.C. §8302, §8306, and §8310	Authorizes USDA to seize, quarantine, and dispose of any animal, article, progeny of any animal, or means of conveyance in order to prevent, detect, control, and eradicate diseases and pests of animals from the United States. Authorizes USDA to consult and cooperate with state authorities, Indian tribal authorities (as defined at 25 U.S.C. §5304), or other persons in the administration of regulations for the improvement of livestock and livestock products. USDA is also authorized to cooperate with Indian tribes, among other domestic and foreign entities, organizations, and government officials to produce and sell sterile screwworms, if USDA determines that the livestock industry and related industries of the United States will not be adversely affected by the production and sale.
Animal Disease Preparedness and Response; National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (USDA/APHIS)	7 U.S.C. §8308a	Includes Indian tribes, as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304, as eligible entities for a National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program. The Secretary can enter into cooperative agreements with Indian tribes regarding the prevention, detection, and rapid response to animal pests and diseases.
National Aquatic Animal Health (USDA/APHIS)	7 U.S.C. §8322	Provides that USDA may enter into a cooperative agreement with an eligible entity to carry out a project under a national aquatic animal health plan. Eligible entities include Indian tribes.
Losses of Livestock due to Depredation by Federally Protected Species (USDA/APHIS)	7 U.S.C. §8355	Directs USDA to provide grants to states and Indian tribes to compensate livestock producers for losses, and to conduct research and carry out activities that reduce the risk of livestock loss due to depredation by federally protected species that occurs on federal, state, or private land or land owned by, or held in trust for, an Indian tribe. The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given at 25 U.S.C. §5304.
Agriculture and Food Defense (DHS)	7 U.S.C. §8914	State and regional strategic response plans must “describe the appropriate interactions among, and roles of ... federal, state, tribal, and units of local government” and “plant or animal industry partners.”
Supplemental Agricultural Disaster Assistance (USDA/FSA)	7 U.S.C. §9081(a)(1)(B)	Indian tribes or tribal organizations, as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304, are defined as an “eligible producer on a farm” for USDA disaster assistance programs. These include the Livestock Indemnity Payments, the Livestock Forage Disaster Program, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program, and the Tree Assistance Program.
McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Act (USDA/NIFA)	16 U.S.C. §582a-1	Provides funding to schools of forestry for research and extension activities. Adds “1994 Institutions” (tribal land-grant colleges) that offer associate or baccalaureate degrees in forestry as eligible to participate under terms determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §1002	Assists local organizations with addressing watershed resource concerns. “Indian tribe” and “tribal organization” (as defined in 25 U.S.C. §5304) are included in the definition of “local organization.”
Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §§2003-2005	Requires USDA to work with entities, including “tribal agencies,” “tribal governments,” and “tribal organizations,” to conduct and develop a broad natural resource strategic assessment and planning document to guide the Department’s administration of conservation activities.
Forest Stewardship Program (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §2103a(c)	Provides financial, technical, and other assistance to state foresters or equivalent state officials to assist landowners in managing nonindustrial private forest land. The definition of “nonindustrial private forest land” includes eligible land owned by Indian tribes.
Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §2103d	Provides financial assistance to local governments, Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations for preventing the conversion of forestland to non-forest uses, such as crop production or residential construction. The term “Indian tribe” is defined as the term is used in 25 U.S.C. §5304. No land acquired using a grant provided under this program can be converted to land held in trust by the United States on behalf of any Indian tribe.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Landscape Scale Restoration Program (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §2109a	Competitive grant program to provide technical and financial assistance to encourage collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes, which must include state or nonindustrial forest land. Eligible projects must have a 50% cost-share match and must be submitted through the state forest agency or equivalent, among other criteria. The term “Indian tribe” is defined as the term is used in 25 U.S.C. §5304, and “nonindustrial private forest land” includes eligible land owned by Indian tribes.
Good Neighbor Authority (USDA/FS, DOI/BLM)	16 U.S.C. §2113a	Under an approved good neighbor agreement, states, counties, and Indian tribes are authorized to do restoration work on FS and BLM lands to restore or improve forest, rangeland, and watershed health. The term “Indian tribe” has the meaning given in 25 U.S.C. §5304.
Stewardship Contracting Authority (USDA/FS, DOI/BLM)	16 U.S.C. §6591c	Authorizes FS and BLM to enter into multiyear, dual service, and timber sale contracts or agreements to achieve specified land management goals. The agencies can use the value of the harvested timber to offset the cost of service activities (i.e., trade goods for services). In addition to entering contracts, “tribal governments” (among other cooperating governmental agencies) may participate in monitoring and evaluation.
National Aquaculture Policy, Planning, and Development; Definitions (USDA/NIFA)	16 U.S.C. §2802(5)	Establishes a national policy to promote U.S. aquaculture and to establish and implement a national aquaculture development plan at USDA. The term “person” who may be interested in the development and implementation of the plan includes “any Indian tribe.”
Conservation Definitions (USDA/NRCS, USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3801(14)	The term “Indian tribe” is defined as in 25 U.S.C. §5304 for all conservation programs under Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198) that provide conservation financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers.
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3831a	The term “Indian tribe” is defined as in 25 U.S.C. §5304. This authority allows USDA to enter into cost-share agreements with Indian tribes and other partners to enroll eligible land in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
CLEAR 30 (USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3831c	Authorizes a pilot project for a 30-year conservation contract called Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR 30) practices. Allows USDA to enter into one or more agreements with Indian tribes and other entities to carry out necessary maintenance of the CLEAR 30 contract.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839aa(2)	Provides assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns. Describes one of the purposes of the program as avoiding the need for resource and regulatory programs by assisting producers to meet environmental quality criteria established by federal, state, tribal, and local agencies.
Conservation Stewardship Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839aa-21(4)	Assists agricultural producers in advancing conservation efforts on eligible land. Defines “eligible land” as private or tribal land on which agricultural commodities, livestock, or forest-related products are produced.
Conservation Stewardship Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839aa-24(f)	Excludes funding arrangements with Indian tribes from the program’s \$200,000 aggregate payment limit between FY2019 and FY2023.
Conservation of Private Grazing Land (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839bb(b)	Funds partnership activities related to conservation practice implemented on private grazing lands. Defines “private grazing land” to include tribally owned land.
Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3839bb-5	Lists “tribal governments” as eligible for grants to encourage owners and operators of private land to voluntarily make that land available for access by public hunting or fishing programs administered by states and “tribal governments.”
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Program (USDA/NRCS and FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3844(a)	Authorizes incentives to encourage the participation of Indian tribes in USDA conservation programs.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Program (USDA/NRCS and FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3844(b)	Limits the release of information related to conservation programs to select federal, state, or local agencies or to Indian tribes working with USDA.
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3844(m)	Requires, under specified conditions, alternative funding arrangements with Indian tribes for carrying out the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Program (USDA/NRCS, USDA/FSA)	16 U.S.C. §3844(p)	Specifies conditions under which USDA may provide technical and programmatic information to federal, state, and local agencies and to Indian tribes, if it would provide regulatory certainty, regulatory predictability, safe harbor, or other similar regulatory assurances.
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3865a(3) and (4)	Funds easements for wetland, grassland, and farmland protection. Includes Indian tribe as an eligible entity and tribal land as eligible land under the program.
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3865c(b)	Provides Indian tribes with the option for a 30-year contract rather than an easement when enrolling in a wetland reserve easement under the program.
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3865c(d)	Allows USDA to enter into one or more agreements with Indian tribes and other entities to carry out necessary restoration, enhancement, or maintenance of a wetland reserve easement.
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3865c(e)	Allows USDA to enter into one or more agreements with Indian tribes and other entities to carry out a special wetland reserve enhancement option under the program.
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3865d(a)	Lands held in trust for Indian tribes by an agency of the United States are eligible for the program.
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §3871a(4)	Provides financial and technical assistance for state, multistate, or watershed-scale agricultural conservation projects. Indian tribes are included in the definition of an “eligible partner” under the program.
Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (USDA/FS, USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §6502(2)	Authorizes various public and private forestland activities. Defines “Indian tribe” as in 25 U.S.C. §5304 for the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148).
Cross-Boundary Hazardous Fuel Reduction Projects (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §6513(e)	Authorizes grants to states to support hazardous fuel reduction projects on both federal and nonfederal land. Includes “tribal land” in the definition of “Non-Federal land.”
Water Source Protection Program (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §6542	Establishes a program to carry out watershed protection and restoration projects on National Forest System land through water source investment partnership agreements with water end users. An “Indian tribe” is included in the definition of “end water user,” and “Tribal governments” may cooperate in developing water source management plans.
Watershed Condition Framework (USDA/FS)	16 U.S.C. §6543	Establishes a Watershed Condition Framework for National Forest System land that evaluates and classifies watershed condition and authorizes development of action plans to restore priority watersheds. Specifies that the Secretary shall coordinate with “interested non-Federal landowners and State, Tribal, and local governments within the relevant watershed.”
Healthy Forest Restoration Program (USDA/NRCS)	16 U.S.C. §6572(e)(2)	Establishes a separate enrollment method for acreage owned by Indian tribes, including a 30-year contract, a 10-year cost-share agreement, a permanent easement, or any combination thereof.

Program (Agency or Office)	U.S.C. Citation	Description
Service of Traditional Foods in Public Facilities (USDA/FNS)	25 U.S.C. §1685	In specified programs and settings, requires USDA and FDA to allow the donation and service of foods that are traditionally prepared and consumed by an Indian tribe.
Tribal Forest Management Demonstration Project (USDA/FS, DOI, BLM)	25 U.S.C. §3115a(b)	Authorizes USDA and the Department of the Interior to enter into ISDEAA “638 contracts,” on a demonstration basis, whereby an Indian tribe or tribal organization may perform the administrative and management functions of programs implementing the Tribal Forest Protection Act.
Management on Indian Rangeland and Farmland (DOI/BIA)	25 U.S.C. §3711	Provides for the management of Indian agricultural lands consistent with ISDEAA provisions (25 U.S.C. §§5301 et seq.) through approved Indian agriculture resource management plans.
Native American Business Development, Trade Promotion, and Tourism (USDA in consultation with other federal agencies)	25 U.S.C. §4301	Provisions include community development initiatives and economic enterprise development activities related to tribal employment and products; a mentor-protégé program; and outreach, training, procurement management, consultation, reporting and feasibility studies requirements. Requires a USDA study to assess current “federal capitalization and related programs and services that are available to assist Indian communities with business and economic development,” including a review to “assess and quantify the extent of assistance provided to non-Indian borrowers and to tribal (and individual) borrowers ... through the loan programs, the loan guarantee programs, or bond guarantee programs” of several federal agencies, including USDA. Other enacted provisions (P.L. 115-334) set criteria for USDA, in consultation with several federal agencies, to designate Tribal Promise Zones (TPZs) nominated by one or more Indian tribes. TPZs are areas designed to provide federal agency resources and technical assistance to work with local leaders to boost economic activity and job growth, improve educational opportunities, reduce crime, and leverage private investment to improve the quality of life. Related provisions were enacted in the Indian Community Economic Enhancement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-261), as amended by P.L. 117-286.
Agricultural Credit (USDA/FSA)	25 U.S.C. §5136	Authorizes USDA to make loans to Indian tribes and tribal corporations to acquire land within reservations, including highly fractionated land.
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) (USDA/FNS)	42 U.S.C. §1769a	A state agency operating FFVP is required to inform “the schools within the state with the highest proportion of free and reduced price meal eligibility, including Native American schools,” of their FFVP eligibility and priority consideration.

Source: Compiled by CRS from a search of the *U.S. Code* referencing the following search terms: Indian tribe, Tribal groups, Indian Tribal Organization, Alaska Native, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, Hawaiian native, Native American, and Underserved Trust Areas. Other information is from “All the Tribal-Specific Provisions in the Enacted 2018 Farm Bill,” compiled by the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) at the University of Arkansas School of Law (January 31, 2019). Text in quotations is statutory language.

Notes: NA = Not applicable; SDFR = socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher; BFR = beginning farmer or rancher; VFR = veteran farmer or rancher. *ISDEAA 638 contracts* provide that an Indian tribe or tribal organization may enter into contracts and with USDA to administer and transfer funding for specified programs that, in the absence of such contracts, would be administered by USDA for the tribe or tribal organization pursuant to P.L. 93-638 (Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, ISDEAA). 638 contracts must conform to statutory and regulatory standards, including specific performance and recordkeeping requirements. For more information about ISDEAA authorities, see CRS In Focus IF11877, *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs*. Agency and office abbreviations: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) includes Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Departmental Administration (DA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Farm Credit System (FCS), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Forest Service (FS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), Rural Development (RD), and Risk Management Agency (RMS); other Departments and agencies include Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of Justice (DOJ), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).

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