

USDA's Mandatory Farm Programs—CBO's Baseline as of March 6, 2020

The federal Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) accounts for a significant portion of mandatory federal spending for agriculture through a wide range of programs shown in the general summary tables. CCC provides commodity price and income supports mainly through four programs:

- The **Price Loss Coverage** program makes payments to producers when the annual average market price per unit of a covered commodity falls below the reference price set in law. Beginning with the 2019 crop year, the Price Loss Coverage program will make payments when the annual average market price per unit of a covered commodity falls below the effective reference price, as defined in the 2018 farm bill (Public Law 115-334, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018).
- The **Agriculture Risk Coverage—County** program makes payments to producers when the actual average revenue for a crop (price times production) within the producer's county falls below the local guaranteed amount, which is based on an average for recent years.
- The **Marketing Loan** program makes short-term loans to farmers at specified commodity loan rates using current production as collateral. Nonrecourse loans may be repaid at less than principle plus interest if the market price estimated by USDA drops below the loan rate. The commodity also may be forfeited to CCC in lieu of loan repayment. Once a loan is repaid, producers are free to sell their crops.
- The federal **Dairy Support** program makes payments to producers to account for the difference between the monthly milk price and the cost of feed. Participants may choose the size of the margin they wish to cover and may be required to pay a premium to the government for such protection.

Participants in the Price Loss Program and in the county-based risk coverage programs may receive payments from only one such program in any given year. The loan program is available to qualified producers in any year. The dairy supports program operates continuously.

Crop Insurance

Through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, producers may purchase insurance against losses in yield or revenues for their crops. On average, the federal government pays roughly 60 percent of a producer's insurance premiums. The government also reimburses private-sector insurance companies for administrative expenses and underwriting gains (a company's share of total gains and losses for insurance policies).

Conservation Programs

The federal government has programs to encourage producers to take fragile land out of production or to make improvements that promote land conservation by preventing erosion or improving productivity, for example.

Disaster Assistance

The federal government offers producers assistance when natural disasters reduce feed available for livestock, cause above-average death rates among livestock, or damage trees.

Commodity Background Tables

Total costs of commodity programs are derived from estimates for individual eligible commodities. Critical factors used to estimate program costs depend on projections of the price, yield, and program acres for each commodity. Historically, prices for a given commodity have been related to, among other things, the ratio of ending stocks to total use. A relatively high ratio implies an excess supply, which usually is associated with a lower price. Estimating prices according to historical relationships helps to keep price projections consistent with other market variables.

To help the agency consider changes to its baseline estimates, CBO convenes an annual meeting in the fall of agricultural economists to discuss supply, demand, and price forecasts for major agricultural commodities like corn, soybeans, wheat, and cotton. In addition, crop insurance analysts are invited to review past performance of the crop insurance program and to discuss program changes. Attendees include economists from the Department of Agriculture's Office of the Chief Economist, World Agricultural Outlook Board, Economic Research Service, Farm Service Agency, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Risk Management Agency, as well as agricultural economists from various universities and private enterprises.

CBO's March 2020 Baseline Projections

These budget projections reflect legislation, administrative actions, and regulatory changes through March 6, 2020. They are based on the economic forecast that CBO completed on January 7, 2020, and do not account for changes to the nation's economic outlook and fiscal situation arising from the recent and rapidly evolving public health emergency related to the novel coronavirus.