

In early 2025, the USDA announced the Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) initiative, which helps farmers and ranchers access new market opportunities while implementing sound conservation practices. AMP prioritizes funding that directly supports farmers through cost-share payments, incentives, and other resources. Among the AMP funding awards is a \$60 million grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and multiple partners to fund *Expanding Agroforestry Markets and Production (EAP)*, a 3-year project to increase agroforestry plantings in 30 states in the Eastern and Midwestern United States and Hawai'i.

This program has generated broad interest from producers, conservationists, and policymakers interested in the potential of agroforestry to improve farm resilience, build soil health, and provide new economic opportunities. Below are answers to common questions about EAP and its incentive payment program.

ABOUT THE EXPANDING AGROFORESTRY INCENTIVE PAYMENT PROGRAM

1. What is the purpose of the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program?

The costs associated with planting new agroforestry systems are often a barrier to adoption for producers. To help address this issue, the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program is designed to help farmers adopt agroforestry practices by providing technical assistance and incentive payments to support the establishment of new acres. Our program is focused on adding new fruit, nut, timber, and wildlife habitat trees and shrubs to working lands through alley cropping, silvopasture, and windbreak practices.

2. What is the structure of the incentive payments and what do they pay for?

USDA's AMP program is piloting new incentive payments to encourage producers to adopt productive conservation practices such as agroforestry. See our [Incentive Payment Calculator](#) to learn more about incentive payments. Producers must follow USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Practice Standards for installing alley cropping, silvopasture, and windbreaks. The incentive payments may be used to cover the best management practices recommended to ensure the newly planted trees and shrubs thrive.

3. When can producers expect to receive payments?

After applying, producers who are selected into the program will be paired with a technical assistance expert from our Regional Lead partner organizations. After completing required eligibility paperwork, an agroforestry project design, and a budget for their operation, producers will enter into an agreement with The Nature Conservancy for enrollment in the Incentive Payment Program. Each enrolled producer is eligible to receive an incentive payment, distributed in three installments according to the following anticipated timeline. Please note that timeline is subject to change due to variables outside of TNC's control.

Category 1

- **1st Payment: Enrollment Incentive** – 70% of the total incentive
 - Paid within approximately 60 days of signing agreement with The Nature Conservancy
- **2nd Payment: Implementation Incentive** – 25% of the total incentive
 - Paid within approximately 60 days of verification of planting (e.g., site visit or photographs)
- **3rd Payment: Reporting Incentive** – 5% of the total incentive
 - In the final year of the program (2028), producer is paid the final remaining incentive payment within approximately 60 days of TNC staff receiving final data submission from the enrolled producer.

4. Who does the funding go to?

The Nature Conservancy will enter into incentive payment agreements with the entity that is registered with FSA for the acreage where the project will take place.

5. Which agroforestry practices can producers apply for through the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program? Which trees and shrubs are eligible?

The Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program only supports alley cropping, silvopasture, and windbreak projects. Producers should consider other programs and funding opportunities for other kinds of agroforestry or reforestation projects.

Trees and shrubs planted through this program must be ecologically appropriate and approved by The Nature Conservancy. A list of approved trees and shrubs is available in the online application form and the [online Incentive Estimator tool](#).

6. What is the minimum and maximum sized project?

- **Minimum:** The per-project acreage minimum is 5 acres in all regions, with the exception of Hawai'i, which has a minimum of 3 acres. There is no minimum or floor on funding for projects.
- **Maximum:** There is no acreage maximum. The cumulative amount of incentive payments that any entity or individual (including through his or her equitable ownership of entities) can receive from EAP during the award period (through 2028) is \$450,000.

7. Are there other complementary grants and funding streams that can augment the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program?

There are multiple funding programs that can complement the incentive payments provided by the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program. An example is the [Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program](#) supported by the Edwards Mother Earth Foundation. Producers selected into the program will receive technical assistance that may include identifying additional funding sources to augment the EAP incentive payments. **NOTE:** NRCS funding from programs like Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) cannot be used to fund the same practices on the same acreage as Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payments.

8. What are the criteria for Underserved Status producers for this program?

The USDA has defined Underserved Status for any producer who has one or more of the following attributes. These include the following four categories of Historically Underserved Producers (full definitions can be found here).

- **Beginning farmers** - less than 10 years of farming experience.
- **Socially disadvantaged farmers** - American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and/or Hispanics.
- **Veteran farmers**
- **Limited resource farmers** - please use this [USDA determination tool](#) to determine if you qualify for this designation.

9. When can producers apply to the program?

The third application cycle will be open from June 30, 2026, until August 11, 2026, for producers in the Upper Midwest, Lower Midwest, Mid-Atlantic/Central Appalachia, Northeast, Southeast and Hawai'i regions. Application deadlines for application cycles will be shared on nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry.

10. If a producer subscribes to the e-mail list and/or submits the online application form, are they enrolled in the program for incentive payments?

No. However, filling out the e-mail list interest form and/or online application form will sign the producer up to receive more information from their Regional Lead and updates on program education events and upcoming incentive payment program application deadlines.

Producers must submit the online application and be selected for the program through a competitive review process. Once a producer is selected into the program, they will be paired with a technical assistance expert from a Regional Lead organization, who will help them develop an agroforestry plan and ensure all eligibility paperwork is completed. Once all required documentation is complete, the producer will start the enrollment process with The Nature Conservancy to enter into an agreement for the incentive payments.

11. Who can producers talk to if they want to learn more about the program?

Producers can join the Expanding Agroforestry Project's [e-mail list](#). If they are in an eligible state, the Regional Lead for their location will reach out to share more information about the project. Before applying, producers are encouraged to schedule a consultation with the program's technical assistance staff for their region via [this form](#), through which up to one hour of guidance will be provided to each applicant.

13. How do producers apply to the program?

To apply, producers must submit an online application at nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry. Because the form does not allow users to save progress, applicants are encouraged to draft responses using the downloadable application template on the site and then copy and paste their final answers into the application.

14. What does "required data collection" mean for Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MMRV)?

This project is required to conduct Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MMRV) activities to ensure that award funds deliver the intended program outcomes. Producers will be required to provide evidence of implementation of their approved agroforestry plan to NRCS specifications before receiving their second incentive payment, and to complete all required reporting before receiving their third incentive payment.

15. What's the minimum number of trees producers can plant per acre?

In order to be reviewed favorably, applications should include more than 36 small trees/shrubs per acre or more than 27 large trees per acre. Producers selected into the program will work with technical assistance experts to determine the appropriate number of trees per acre given the operation's context and goals. All projects must follow NRCS Conservation Practice Standards for alley cropping, silvopasture, and windbreaks.

16. When will applications be reviewed? When can producers expect to hear something back?

Producers typically receive a decision on their application within approximately 10 weeks after the enrollment cycle deadline.

17. What should producers have prepared for their application? What makes for a successful application? Interested producers are welcome to review the online application at nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry. Successful applications are thorough, and successful applicants should complete as many of the optional questions they can. An example of a complete application will be made available at nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry.

18. Who is reviewing and selecting the applications? What are the scoring criteria?

Applications are reviewed by technical assistance providers and Regional Leads, and final decisions are made by TNC as the project lead. Scoring criteria include but are not limited to evidence of relevant experience and qualifications for the scope of the project, cost-effectiveness, project size, economic viability and market scalability, and thoroughness of the submitted application. Reviewers prioritize projects with strong potential for long-term success, while also considering the project's potential to encourage new producers to adopt agroforestry practices.

19. What kind of technical support and resources will be made available to selected producers?

Anyone who is interested in learning more about agroforestry is encouraged to visit the Resources section at [nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry](https://www.nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry) for a curated selection of online educational materials developed and/or recommended by EAP project partners. All applicants are eligible for up to one hour of free consultation with a technical assistance provider to discuss their proposal. Sign up for your consult [here](#).

Producers selected into the program will be paired with technical assistance experts who will guide the producer through developing an agroforestry plan for their operation. This technical support is free to producers selected into the program and will typically be staff from the Regional Lead organization.

20. I'm already working with a technical assistance organization that is not the Regional Lead for my state. Can I work with them on my agroforestry plan?

The Expanding Agroforestry Project provides free technical assistance to producers selected for participation in the Incentive Payment Program. If a producer wishes to utilize technical assistance from other external entities, producers may do so at their own expense. Ultimately, selected producers must have an agroforestry plan approved by the Regional Lead organization for their state before they can enter an agreement with The Nature Conservancy for incentive payments.

21. Can I apply for NRCS programs and this program?

Producers are not allowed to be paid for the same practice on the same acreage by multiple NRCS funding sources such as EQIP, CSP, and CRP and also funded for those practices on that same acreage from the Advancing Markets for Producers program (e.g., EAP Incentive Payment Program). Producers may apply to other NRCS programs in addition to the EAP Incentive Payment Program; however, only one program may be used for each practice on the same land. "Double dipping," or using multiple programs for the same practice, is strictly prohibited by USDA.

22. What kind of paperwork can producers expect for this program?

To be in this program, producers must be willing to complete required paperwork for USDA and to enter into an agreement with The Nature Conservancy. The project has program staff who will help producers navigate the required paperwork.

An updated Subsidiary Print from FSA must be provided before each payment can be made by TNC to enrolled producers. Examples of required forms include, but may not be limited to:

- FSA number (and assigned Farm, Tract, & Field IDs)
- Approved CPA-52
- Form AD-2047
- Form CCC-902
- Form AD-1026
- Certification that applicant is not a foreign person or entity
- Subsidiary print form
- Producer Enrollment Survey
- Conflict of Interest form (with The Nature Conservancy)
- W-9
- ACH Form (required only if opting for preferred electronic payment processing)

23. How will producer data be shared during this project?

Project partners and The Nature Conservancy are required to follow 1619 Compliance for this program. Producers may opt in if they are willing to participate in media activities—such as interviews, photography, video, and social media content—featuring their operation.

24. How often should producers expect project staff will visit their operations?

Project staff will not visit operations until after producers are selected into the program. If producers are selected into the program, project staff will visit the operation during the technical assistance phase. A visit may be needed ahead of the final incentive payment to verify practices have been implemented per NRCS specifications. In all instances, project staff will coordinate with the producer to ensure it is a mutually convenient time to visit the operation. If producers indicate their willingness to be a Science Research Site, there could be additional opportunities when project staff would visit the operation.

25. What does it mean to be a Science Research Site?

In the application, producers are asked if they are willing to be a research site. To achieve program goals, it will be helpful to designate as many Science Research Sites as possible. *NOTE: Being a Science Research Site is optional and in addition to the required MMRV activities.*

Agroforestry has been practiced for millennia by communities around the world, importantly by Indigenous communities. The application of agroforestry in modern, industrialized U.S. contexts is in a nascent stage. Through this project, there is an opportunity to collect important baseline data before planting, and to conduct long-term/longitudinal research for many years past the award period of this grant funding. We seek to identify producers who are willing to have multi-disciplinary science conducted on their operation to improve our shared understanding of the impact and opportunities of agroforestry.

Producer contact information with a limited amount of information about their operation will be put on the 'Expanding Agroforestry – Science Research Site' List. Producers may be contacted by their preferred method by researchers interested in collecting data at their operation. Science research could include a variety of projects such as soil science, anthropology, and economics. Producers will have the opportunity to opt in or opt out of any individual research project. Producers will also be able to remove their operation from the Expanding Agroforestry Science Research Site List.

26. If I receive funds, will it be taxable? What are the tax implications of the incentive payments? Will it come to me as an individual or to my farm business, can I decide?

The Nature Conservancy does not give accounting or tax advice. Producers can ask their tax professionals for advice. The Nature Conservancy will enter into an agreement for the incentive payments to the entity that is registered with the FSA and named in their subsidiary print form (this could be a business or an individual).

27. Will my project plan need to be approved by a certified NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP)?

Project plans will be approved by Regional Leads. That organization's staff may or may not include certified NRCS Technical Service Providers.

28. How long must I participate in the project?

In order to receive incentive payment funding, each selected producer will enter an agreement with The Nature Conservancy for a duration of 18 months or through November 2028, whichever is sooner at the time of contracting. The aim of the project is for these new acres of agroforestry plantings to be economically viable in such a way that producers are motivated to support their maintenance for many decades to come.

FREQUENT ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

29. What are the eligibility requirements?

Note: Producers who do not yet meet all of these requirements but are willing to become fully eligible are encouraged to apply to the program (e.g., required FSA documentation is not needed at the time of application).

Below are the current eligibility requirements for producers to receive incentive payments through the Expanding Agroforestry Project. These eligibility requirements are subject to change during the course of the award period.

Geography:

The project must be in: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawai'i, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, or Wisconsin.

Practices:

The project must follow NRCS Conservation Practice Standards for alley cropping, silvopasture, and/or windbreaks (either the state Conservation Practice Standards or the national Conservation Practice standards may be used).

Land Control:

Producers either need to own the land or produce a letter from the landowner in support of the project and attesting to an existing lease for the contract duration.

Required Paperwork:

Project staff will support producers in acquiring these documents.

- Approved CPA-52;
- Project staff must review each fiscal year the producer's Subsidiary Print form they must obtain from their local FSA field office each fiscal year. The Subsidiary Print form must read "compliant" for all conservation compliance portions, and "certified" for AD-1026. This form is dependent on completion of the following:
 - AD-2047 (Customer Data Worksheet to facilitate the collection of customer data for Business Partner Record);
 - CCC-902 (Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility 2009 and Subsequent Program Years);
 - Certify and maintain HELC and WC compliance via Form AD-1026, Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and
 - Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification;
- Certify that producer is not a foreign person or entity;
- Conflict of Interest form (with The Nature Conservancy);
- W-9; and,
- ACH Form (required only if opting for preferred electronic payment processing)

Producers are not bound by the payment limitations and the adjusted gross income (AGI) limitations that are in place for other USDA programs.

30. My project is 3 acres. Should I still apply to the program?

Each region sets their own minimum acreage amount. Currently, all regions have a minimum of 5 acres per project (except for the Hawaiian Islands, which has a minimum of 3 acres). Projects that are less than the region's minimum acreage are discouraged from applying for this program.

31. What species and varieties of trees and shrubs are eligible for this program?

A list of approved trees and shrubs is available in the [online Incentive Estimator tool](#) - see Step 3: Agroforestry Species – and in the Online Application Form. If there are any questions, producers and/or project partners are welcome to email ExpandingAgroforestry@tnc.org.

32. I'm interested in applying with a project that's forest farming / micro-urban food forests / riparian buffers / reforestation. Should I apply to your program?

Our program is not the right fit for projects that are not explicitly focused on alley cropping, silvopasture, and windbreaks—strategically incorporating trees into crop and grazing operations. At this time, we cannot support individuals that are pursuing other forms of agroforestry or reforestation/afforestation given the limitations of our grant with USDA. Please see our Resources page at nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry that includes some resources that may help support your project.

33. I am interested in silvopasture – specifically transitioning my woodlot into a grazing area. Should I apply to your program?

The Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program is not the right fit for "silvopasture by subtraction" or converting woodlots into grazing areas. The program is solely focused on supporting "additive" silvopasture – new trees into existing pasture or cropland. Forest conversion, clearing or thinning is explicitly precluded from EAP-funded projects.

34. I am not in an eligible state for your program. How can I learn more about agroforestry?

Please see our Resources page at nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry that includes some resources that may help support your project. The USDA National Agroforestry Center has many useful resources, and they support producers throughout the US

that are interested in adopting agroforestry.

35. Can Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program funding be used to pay for agriculture-related assets (e.g., truck, equipment, well, livestock, marketing supplies, etc.)?

Funding to producers from the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program can only be used to support the supplies and activities necessary for the successful establishment of new plantings of agroforestry systems following NRCS Practice Standards. It is not permissible to use this funding to purchase supplies, equipment, or capital improvements that are not directly related to the success of establishing new plantings of agroforestry systems.

36. I'm already doing agroforestry and/or perennial agriculture on my operation. Can I apply for this funding to expand my operation?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for this funding if you are interested in expanding your existing agroforestry or perennial agriculture operation by planting trees on acres not currently in an agroforestry practice. Our incentive payment does not pay producers for orchards or agroforestry systems that are already established.

For existing operations, you should apply for establishing agroforestry on new acreage as opposed to augmenting existing acreage that already is in agroforestry. It is important to ensure you are eligible for this funding if you have previously or are currently under contract with NRCS for agroforestry practices on your operation.

ABOUT THE EXPANDING AGROFORESTRY PROJECT

37. What's the Expanding Agroforestry Project?

The 'Expanding Agroforestry Markets and Production' ("Expanding Agroforestry Project") is a \$60M Advancing Markets for Producers project funded by the USDA that aims to help producers incorporate agroforestry practices into their operations. The project will be distributing \$39M in direct-to-producer incentive payments over the next three years to directly incentivize the planting of trees and shrubs on crop and pastureland in 30 U.S. states. The project is advancing the adoption of three agroforestry practices: windbreaks, alley cropping, and silvopasture. The project award period initiated in March 2026 and is expected to conclude in 2029 (three years).

38. What are the major goals of the Expanding Agroforestry Project?

Over the next three years, the Expanding Agroforestry Project has a goal of supporting 30,000 acres of new agroforestry plantings. The project aims to engage a minimum of 250 producers.

TNC and the project partners intend to do this by:

- Offering free, regionalized technical assistance and outreach to farmers;
- Providing \$39M in direct incentive payments to farmers for significantly subsidizing tree plantings;
- Working with companies and retailers to expand markets, both in demand and supporting infrastructure, for agroforestry commodities

39. Who is leading this project? What organizations are involved?

The Nature Conservancy is the project lead and responsible for granting administration; processing incentive payments to producers; and leading the measuring, monitoring, reporting and verification (MMRV) effort. TNC is working with six regional leads—*Hawai'i 'Ulu Cooperative*, Propagate, Savanna Institute, Tuskegee University, the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, and Virginia Tech University—that will provide regionalized support to the program and participating farmers, including expanding project financing and developing markets for agroforestry commodities. Additional project partner organizations include Appalachian Sustainable Development, Handsome Brook Farm, New York Tree Crops Alliance, Trees for Graziers and the University of Vermont. This project brings together leading businesses, academic institutions and non-profit organizations working on agroforestry. See [nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry](https://www.nature.org/ExpandingAgroforestry) for a full list of project partners and supporting organizations.

40. What is included in the \$60M budget of the grant?

Of the \$60 million grant, \$39 million (65% of the budget) will be paid out via direct-to-producer incentive payments through the Expanding Agroforestry Incentive Payment Program. The remaining portion of the budget supports expanded staff capacity at project partner organizations and supporting other enabling conditions for the expansion of agroforestry,

including developing market opportunities for agroforestry commodities.

41. How is the project helping to expand markets for agroforestry products?

A significant component of this project is to expand the markets and producer access to markets for agroforestry commodities, like nuts, fruits, and timber, as well as livestock products produced in silvopasture settings, to further incentivize the planting of trees on millions of acres of working lands. Project partners will work with companies and retailers to identify barriers and solutions to market growth, assess demand for agroforestry products, and develop business models to enable farmers to get their products to market. The enabling business activities created through this project have the potential to unleash market forces that could achieve significant expansion of agroforestry on working lands.

ABOUT AGROFORESTRY

42. What is agroforestry?

Agroforestry is the intentional integration of ecologically appropriate trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic, and social benefits.

43. What are the environmental benefits of agroforestry?

Major environmental benefits of agroforestry include reductions in soil disturbance, improvements in soil health and water quality, enhancement of wildlife habitat, and air quality improvements.

44. What are the economic benefits of agroforestry?

Additional revenue streams for producers through the production of agroforestry commodities such as fruits, nuts, timber, and livestock products grown in silvopasture settings. There is also potential to access high-value markets for 'ecologically' or 'regeneratively'-produced food products from agroforestry systems, via local markets and nascent certification protocols.

45. How common are agroforestry practices?

In a 2022 survey conducted by USDA, 32,717 farm operations had at least one agroforestry practice, representing 1.7% of all farm operations in the United States.

ABOUT THE USDA'S ADVANCING MARKETS FOR PRODUCERS PROGRAM

46. What is the USDA's Advancing Markets for Producers initiative?

The USDA's Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) is a funding initiative that provides farmers and ranchers with support to implement sound conservation practices and access new market opportunities. AMP prioritizes funding that directly supports producers through cost-share payments, incentives, and other resources. The Expanding Agroforestry Project aligns with USDA priorities by strengthening voluntary conservation efforts that improve water and land resources, while providing farmers with customized technical assistance and incentive payments to enhance and sustain their operations. Learn more about the program [here](#).

Questions? Email the EAP team at ExpandingAgroforestry@tnc.org. The Nature Conservancy may make changes to the program structure and producer eligibility requirements throughout the award period.

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number NR233A750004G005. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, any reference to specific brands or types of products or services does not constitute or imply an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for those products or services.