



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Farm Production
And Conservation
(FPAC)

Farm Service
Agency (FSA)

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Stop 0540
Washington, DC
20250-0540

DATE: September 12, 2021

TO: Julie A. Wise
OMB Desk Officer

THROUGH: Ruth Brown
USDA Information Collection Officer

FROM: Jamie White
FSA Acting Deputy Administrator Farm Programs

SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Approval for a New Information Collection Package—Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP)

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is requesting an emergency approval on a collection of information necessary to implement the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP) because we could not comply with the normal clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act to obtain OMB approval, and it is essential to the mission of USDA for work to support farmers with organic agriculture. USDA directed FSA to implement OTECP to assist certified organic operations and transitional operations, who incur significant costs to obtain or renew USDA organic certification each year. The economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic have made obtaining and renewing USDA organic certification financially challenging for many operations and make it necessary for use to request OMB approval through and emergency approval. USDA has determined there are available funds from the CARES Act (CARES Act; Division B, Title I, Pub. L. 116–136) that remain available until expended to use to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus by providing support for agricultural producers impacted by coronavirus, including producers of specialty crops, producers that supply local food systems, including farmers markets, restaurants, and schools, and livestock producers, including dairy producers.

The Notice of funds availability (NOFA) will be published in the Federal Register to provide guidance and notify applicants of the two sign-up periods; the sign-up dates will be finalized when we receive clearance for the NOFA and the emergency PRA approval. The Secretary announced this as a summer start; we will start taking applications as soon as possible. OBPA requested that OMB clear the NOFA by Monday, September 20. Up to 13,250 applicants are expected to apply for OTECP.

FSA needs to collect the following information from applicants:

- The applicant’s certified organic operation name and certification identification number (not required for transitional operations);

- The applicant's eligible expenses; and
- Other cost share that was previously received for those expenses by the applicant, excluding any cost share provided through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program.

Applicants must submit form FSA-883, Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP). Applicants must also have the following forms on file with FSA:

- AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet, and
- SF-3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form.

We are requesting emergency approval of a new information collection package as soon as possible in order to quickly provide additional assistance to certified operations and transitional operations eligible for OTECP.

If there are any questions or concerns, please call Deirdre Holder at 202-205-5851 or Mary Ann Ball at 202-720-4283.