The Harvest Fuel Relief Deadline That Already Passed

Acres must be on file by October 16 to qualify for part of the $8 billion USDA fuel relief



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USDA announced the $8 billion Harvest Fuel Relief Program on October 19. The eligibility cutoff was October 16.

That is not a typo. FSA has now posted a program page, and the first line under Title I commodities says only acreage on file with FSA by

October 16, 2026 is eligible. The announcement came three days after the door closed.

The logic makes sense once you see how the payment is built. USDA said back in October it would use a uniform formula driven by FSA reported planted acres along with ERS cost of production estimates and WASDE yields and prices. If the payment runs off your acreage report, then the acreage report has to be frozen at some point. They just picked a date and did not mention it for three days.

For most of my row crop clients this is a non-event. If you filed your acreage report by the usual summer deadline, your corn and soybean acres are on file and you are fine. It is everybody else I am thinking about.

Four situations worth checking:

1. 1. Ground you picked up late in the season and never got reported.
2. 2.An acreage report you knew had a problem and planned to straighten out this winter.
3. 3. A new operation, or a new entity, that has never filed with FSA.
4. 4. An entity that farms but has no FSA records of its own because everything ran through a related entity.

Here is what I would do this week. Pull the FSA-578 acreage report for every entity you file for and look at what was actually on file as of October 16. Then call the county office. You want to find a gap now, not in January when the pre-filled application shows up 400 acres short and there is nothing to be done about it.

While you are at it, set up a Login.gov account if you do not have one. That is how FSA says the pre-filled application will come to you.

What we still do not know is almost everything else. No payment rates. No signup window. No payment limit. No adjusted gross income test. No form number. The page now says eligible commodities will be announced in the coming weeks, which is a step back from USDA's original promise of rates in November. Crop insurance participation is not required, which is the one piece of good news.

If you grow specialty crops, there is a detail in the fine print. USDA is still deciding which non-Title I commodities qualify and is asking industry groups and producers to send in on farm fuel consumption data. The fuel it wants to hear about is production fuel. It specifically excludes fuel used to process the crop or move it out of the field or to market. If your group is assembling numbers, build them that way.