

PREPARED FOR
USDA Office of the Chief
Economist

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BY THE NUMBERS

12

public data archives, each with
documentation, code, and archive
listings

8

Freedom of Information Act requests
fulfilled and published

1,380+

weekly US Drought Monitor maps
mirrored, January 2000–present

\$13.8B

in LFP payments documented, 2008–
2025

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Three-year cooperative agreement
with the USDA Office of the Chief
Economist (OEEP), in partnership
with the USDA Climate Hubs and
the Farm Service Agency. Led by
the Montana Climate Office at the
University of Montana – Montana's
official state climate office.

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DATA & CODE

sustainable-fsa.com/data



The Sustainable FSA Data Archives

Twelve public, auditable archives of the data behind FSA disaster assistance

BOTTOM LINE

Every input to a Livestock Forage Disaster Program eligibility determination – the weekly Drought Monitor, county boundaries, normal grazing periods, and the resulting eligibility and payment records – is now publicly archived in standardized, analysis-ready formats with documented provenance. Any county determination since 2008 can be independently reproduced and audited.

Why archive program data

LFP eligibility is determined weekly for every county in the United States, at the intersection of the US Drought Monitor (USDM), county boundaries, and each county's normal grazing periods.¹ Yet the records behind those determinations have been scattered across agency web pages that change without notice, internal datasets available only by FOIA request, and files distributed in formats that resist analysis. When inputs disappear or drift, past determinations become impossible to verify and program analysis becomes impossible to reproduce. The Sustainable FSA project's twelve archives close that gap: each pairs the original records with documentation, reproducible acquisition code, and standardized analysis-ready formats, surfaced at sustainable-fsa.com/data.

The US Drought Monitor record

Four archives preserve the drought classifications that trigger LFP. The core archive mirrors every weekly USDM map since the machine-readable record began on January 4, 2000 – more than 1,380 maps – validated and transformed to GeoParquet with full metadata,² alongside the official weekly maps at the [National Drought Mitigation Center \(NDMC\)](#). Three companion archives aggregate the weekly record to the county geographies that matter for program administration: the counties [as reported by the USDM itself](#), [US Census county boundaries](#), and the [LFP county boundaries](#) actually used in eligibility determinations by the NDMC – enabling like-for-like comparison of how boundary choice affects who qualifies.

FSA program records obtained under FOIA

Two archives publish the program inputs and outputs that previously existed only inside FSA. The [Normal Grazing Periods archive](#) holds the official county-level grazing period definitions for 2008–2026, obtained through FOIA requests 2025-FSA-04691-F, 2026-FSA-02435-F, and 2026-FSA-03465-F³ — the date windows that determine when drought can trigger eligibility, governed by FSA Handbook 1-LFP and Notice NAP-190.⁴

⁵ The [LFP Eligibility archive](#) holds the official county-by-county eligibility determinations for 2008–2025, obtained through FOIA requests 2023-FSA-00937-F, 2025-FSA-04690-F, 2025-FSA-08422-F, and 2026-FSA-02433-F.⁶ A [web companion archive](#) preserves the weekly eligibility maps and tables as FSA published them, 2008–present — the public face of the determinations, captured before pages change or disappear.

County boundary datasets

Three archives document which boundaries FSA has actually used — central to the project’s finding that eligibility is adjudicated on a non-authoritative boundary dataset essentially unchanged since 2012, even as the Census recorded hundreds of boundary changes.^{7;8} The [LFP Counties archive](#) is a FOIA-obtained snapshot (request 2025-FSA-08431-F) of the boundary dataset used in eligibility determinations as of September 2025. The [FSA_Counties_dd17](#) archive preserves the boundary geodatabase FSA formerly distributed publicly, with its authoritative documentation in FSA Handbook 1-GIS; the [FSA_Counties_dd22](#) archive holds its successor, obtained via FOIA request 2026-FSA-03465-F. Together they provide the reference record for assessing where determinations and authoritative Census boundaries diverge.

Payments and disaster designations

The [Farm Payment Files archive](#) standardizes FSA’s payment records for 2004–2025 — originally scattered across annually varying Excel files in FSA’s electronic reading room — into a partitioned, analysis-ready Parquet dataset.⁹ It is the source of the project’s computation that LFP has distributed \$13.8 billion since 2008, and it supports county-level analysis of every FSA program. The [FSA Disasters archive](#) captures Secretarial disaster designations (2012–present) and Presidential Major Disaster declarations (2017–present) weekly from the USDA disaster designation portal — the declarations that unlock emergency assistance beyond LFP.

Access and stewardship

All twelve archives are freely available: documentation pages at sustainable-fsa.com/data, bulk data at data.sustainable-fsa.com, and acquisition and processing code on [GitHub](#). Formats follow open standards — GeoParquet for spatial data, CSV and Parquet for tables — and frequently updated sources (the USDM mirrors, disaster designations, weekly eligibility) refresh automatically. Key archives carry Zenodo DOIs for stable citation,^{3;6} and each repository includes a recommended citation and machine-readable metadata. The archives already underpin the project’s grazing-period reanalysis, the county boundary finding presented to OCE-OEEP, and USDA ERS analysis of the program’s stocking and fiscal impacts¹⁰ — and they are available to any researcher, producer, or oversight body that needs to check the record.

References

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