

# Illinois Extension | Urban Farms

## Benefits of Obtaining a Farm Number



The [United States Department of Agriculture](#) is making a push to better meet the needs of urban, small-scale, and historically underserved farmers. In 2023, the USDA launched an [Urban Service Center](#) to serve the needs of Cook County farmers, in particular urban farmers. Many, although not all, USDA monetary assistance programs require a farm number.

### What is a Farm Number?

A farm number, or farm serial number, identifies where your farm is located. Think of it like a zip code. The FSN is attached to the land, not the farmer, so if your land has previously been farmed, it may have *already* been assigned a farm number.

### USDA Monetary Assistance Programs

USDA programs providing financial assistance to urban farmers include:

- Cost-share programs for implementing conservation practices.
- Farm ownership and operating microloans.
- Disaster assistance.
- Value-added and specialty crop grants.
- Cost-sharing for organic certification.
- Crop insurance through the whole farm revenue protection program.

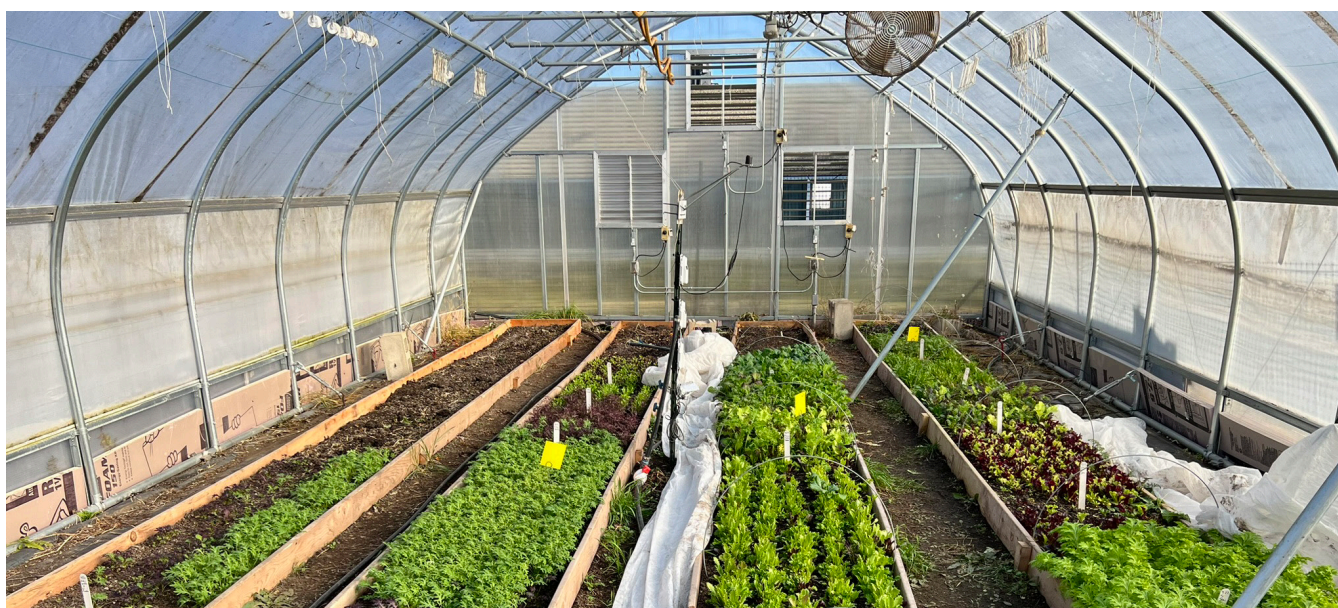
### How to Register for a Farm Number

[USDA's Farm Service Agency](#) issues farm numbers. To start the process, call your Illinois USDA Urban Service Center, 815-462-3106, to set an in-person or virtual appointment. You will need either a social security or employer identification number and a copy of your deed or formal rental agreement.

Allow some time to receive a farm number. It may take longer than expected because most urban farms have not been mapped and officially entered as farmland with the USDA. Be patient. USDA employees are working hard to ensure the process goes as smoothly as possible.

### Maintain FSA Records for Program Eligibility

These records include information on land ownership, the amount of land in production, types of crops grown, and details on USDA program participation. Update your records when making changes to the farm operation and complete your acreage report every year. Your local office will have the most up-to-date information on what information you will need to report and when it should be reported.





## Why Should I Get a Farm Number?

Even if you do not currently need financial assistance, having a farm number allows you to immediately apply to receive financial assistance when new programs are announced. Sometimes, the window to apply is short, or programs might run out of funding in the time it would take to apply for and receive a farm number. Finally, with each new farm bill or change in administration, funding levels and programs can change or even be eliminated. Join the [FSA's mailing list](#) to stay informed of the latest program changes.



## Additional Benefits

A farm number allows you to:

- Vote in FSA County Committee elections. This committee of local farmers makes recommendations for hiring and disaster assistance and promotes FSA programs.
- Be counted in the Agricultural Census. By getting a more accurate count of farms, your county might receive more resources. Currently in urban areas, more farms are operating than are being counted.
- Apply for agricultural sales tax exemptions.

## USDA Programs for Urban Farmers

Learn more about programs for urban farms at [usda.gov/topics/urban](https://www.usda.gov/topics/urban).

## Additional Resources

[Business Planning for Urban Farms](#), Illinois Extension [Mission and Vision](#), Illinois Extension [NRCS Practices for Urban Farms](#), Illinois Extension [EQIP Myth Busters](#), USDA

## Author

[Kathryn Pereira](#), Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator, University of Illinois Extension.

For more information about urban farm planning and programs, contact Kathryn Pereira, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, [kpereira@illinois.edu](mailto:kpereira@illinois.edu).

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