

Crop Insurance 101: How to File a Claim



Federal crop insurance offers producers protection against losses from natural causes, such as severe weather, pests, and disease. When a loss occurs, a producer can file a claim with their agent and receive a payment to help cover the lost income. Producers should know how to report these losses and how to make a claim to ensure they receive the funds they need.

When to make a claim

Damage from an insurable crop loss needs to be reported within 72 hours. Claims should be filed any time a producer believes their yields will be impacted. Potential loss may be easy to identify, as when a wind or hail storm causes sudden damage, or it may require continued monitoring in events such as drought. Producers should pay close attention to the condition of their crops so they can report issues in a timely manner.

If losses, such as low-quality or damaged crops, are discovered during harvest, the producer should stop and contact their crop insurance agent to conduct an assessment. The request should be made immediately, as losses can only be reported up to 15 days after harvest. Claims must also be made before the end of the insurance period, as outlined in the producer's individual policy.¹

Replant coverage claims

For policies that include replant coverage, timing is essential. These policies cover the cost to replant a harvestable crop, provided there is enough time for it to grow during the normal season. If seedlings or young plants are damaged, producers must act quickly so adjusters can inspect the area. Inspection must happen before replanting begins for the costs to be covered. Without an inspection, producers may forfeit their ability to make a claim.²

What comes next

After the producer contacts their crop insurance agent, a loss adjuster will be sent to inspect the damage. To ensure they receive the full benefit of their claim and determine a timeline for the inspection, the producer should know and share their plans for the damaged crop with the agent, whether that be replanting, replacing with a cover crop, or making a claim for the full loss. The producer must continue to care for the crop using good farming practices until the inspection is complete.³

Sources

1 "Claims Process." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency, rma.usda.gov/about-crop-insurance/managing-your-farm-risk/insurance-cycle/claims-process. Accessed August 2024.

2 "Replanting and Final Planting Dates." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency, May 17, 2017, rma.usda.gov/about-crop-insurance/frequently-asked-questions/replanting-final-planting-dates. Accessed September 2024.

3 "Claims Process." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency, rma.usda.gov/about-crop-insurance/managing-your-farm-risk/insurance-cycle/claims-process. Accessed August 2024.



How quickly an adjuster makes an inspection varies. When submitting a replant coverage claim, the adjuster will schedule an inspection as soon as possible given the claim's time constraints. If a loss is the result of an ongoing issue such as drought and the producer intends to harvest the crop, it may take longer to hear from an adjuster because the situation may not be considered urgent.

If a producer plans to remove the damaged crop and replace it with a cover crop, the adjuster must first inspect the area. This is a valuable option if there is not time in the season to plant another harvestable crop, as producers can still gain the ecological benefits of maintaining ground cover, which include reduction in runoff and erosion and increased soil nutrient storage and organic matter. If damaged crops are removed before inspection, the producer forfeits the right to make a claim, so following the process is essential.⁴

Preparing for an inspection

Producers are encouraged to be present during the inspection to offer insight and answer questions about the crop and reported damage.⁵ To prepare for the inspection, the producer will need to have their U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) documents illustrating their acres and crop locations. The adjuster should be familiar with the producer's policy and have copies of the operation's production history.

Certified in various ways to calculate crop yield, the adjuster's methods may include counting plants in a sample area, weighing samples, taking photographs, checking adjacent fields, and referencing weather data. Upon completion, the producer can use the information as part of their claim to the insurance company, which will process the request and supply the needed payment.⁶



Producer's responsibilities:

- Report quickly
- Continue to care for the damaged crop
- Prepare FSA documents
- Be present for the inspection

Sources, continued

- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.

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