

Third-costliest disaster year on record is 2022

Last year will go into the record books as the third-costliest year for weather disasters in U.S. history, with an estimated \$165 billion in total economic losses.

New analysis by American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) economists shows extreme weather caused more than \$21 billion in crop losses in 2022.

The impact to America's farms and ranches demonstrates the importance of farm bill programs to help rural communities recover from weather-related disasters.

The Market Intel, part of AFBF's series on disaster losses, analyzes and summarizes total crop loss estimations across all major weather events for 2022, including hurricanes Fiona and Ian, the June 13 derecho that impacted several central U.S. states and the ongoing drought affecting much of the Western U.S.

The report also analyzes the coverage—and coverage gaps—provided by existing risk management programs, such as crop insurance, as well as ad hoc disaster assistance like the Farm Service Agency's new Emergency Relief Program (ERP), previously known as the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Plus Program (WHIP+).

"Over \$11 billion in losses were covered by existing Risk Management Agency programs as of February 2022. Over \$10 billion in losses were not insured through RMA, existed

outside policies' coverage levels, or did not qualify under an existing risk management program," AFBF economists said.

This highlights the importance of inclusive protections for growers of all crops in all regions of the nation.

"It's not hard to see why programs like crop insurance and disaster coverage are vital to the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers, and the stability of our country as a whole," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Even a brief analysis of estimates from last year's disaster losses proves why a strong farm safety net is a necessity. When you have nature as a business partner, you need a strong support system to help put the pieces back together when the unexpected happens."

In 2022, Texas suffered the most significant hit, with over \$6.4 billion in incurred losses primarily made up of \$2.9 billion in damages to cotton, \$1.7 billion in damages to forage and rangeland and nearly \$1 billion in wheat damage. The majority of those losses were attributed to widespread exceptional drought conditions but also partly linked to May hailstorms and severe weather in April.

The full extent of damage across agriculture is likely far higher as crop loss estimates do not include infrastructure damage, livestock losses, horticulture crop losses or timber losses associated with the weather events.

Statewide partnership fights to end human trafficking

First Lady of Texas Cecilia Abbott has partnered with state agencies including the Texas Department of Transportation this month to raise awareness about human trafficking and help Texans learn how to combat the crime.

Victims of human trafficking come from across society, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status or hometown. Tackling the issue takes a variety of state agencies working together to raise awareness, and provide educational opportunities on how to spot the signs and how to report trafficking activity.

Texas collaborates to raise awareness, increase our vigilance, and report signs of this horrendous crime," said First Lady Abbott. "These victims are not invisible when we learn to look for the signs of suspected abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Working together, we can all help to end this injustice."

"TxDOT plays a critical role in this fight as traffickers utilize our infrastructure to commit this crime," TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams said. "We're training our employees to spot it in rural, suburban, and urban communities across the state. It's important that we all work together to look for the signs because it can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time."

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Fire! The Robert Lee Volunteer Fire Department responded to a call for a structure fire northwest of Robert Lee on Thursday, March 9. Unfortunately, the home was deemed a total loss. An account has been opened at Robert Lee State Bank for the Harvey Wink family for those that wish to help.



Story Time! Kassie Carrera (far left) and Skyler Rainwater (far right), representing The Shindig, attended the Coke County Library Story Time on Wednesday, March 8, to read and paint with the kiddos in attendance.

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