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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Indiana Farm Service Agency Program Updates

Indiana Farm Service Agency

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From the Desk of the State Executive Director

When thinking of Indiana agriculture, most people gravitate toward vast fields of corn and soybeans. And while those crops are extremely important to the state, Indiana has earned its spot in top national rankings for several other commodities. The Hoosier State is tenth nationally in total agricultural production and in the top five for crop production, thanks to the abundance of corn and soybeans which rank fifth and fourth nationally. Indiana also ranks fifth in the nation for swine production and second for poultry. In the fruits and vegetables category, Indiana takes the fifth spot for cantaloupe production, sixth for tomatoes and watermelon, and twelfth for blueberries.

Indiana may be known for corn, but there is more than corn in Indiana; the state's aquaculture industry (or fish farming) is gaining speed.

The Indiana Farm Service Agency works hard to serve producers with all types of agriculture in Indiana. Our employees take pride in providing the best possible service to the valued customers we serve.

As we begin 2018, let us strive to achieve and maintain the Strategic Goals the United States Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has set. Our dedicated Indiana Farm Service Agency employees will work diligently to fulfill USDA's motto, "Do right and feed everyone".

May you all have a great Holiday Season!

Steve

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USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

Farmers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may enroll for the 2018 crop year. The enrollment period will end on Aug. 1, 2018.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

The producers on a farm that are not enrolled for the 2018 enrollment period will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2018 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in previous years must still enroll during the 2018 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office.

2018 Acreage Reporting Dates

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers are encouraged to visit your local county FSA office to file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed below or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable for Indiana:

January 2 - Honey
January 15 - Apples
June 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 5/1-5/31 in Knox County)
July 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 5/10-6/15 in all counties), all other crops
August 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 6/16-8/5 in Fulton, LaPorte, Porter, and St. Joseph Counties)
September 15 - Cucumbers (Planted 6/1-8/15 in Knox County)
September 30 - Value Loss and Controlled Environment Crop (for the coming program year)
November 15 - Perennial Grazing and Forage Crops (alfalfa, grass, mixed forages, clover, etc.)
December 15 - Fall Mint, Fall-Seeded Small Grains

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.

- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the above acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.
- If a perennial forage crop is reported with the intended use of “cover only,” “green manure,” “left standing,” or “seed,” then the acreage must be reported by July 15th.
- Cucumbers and crops for NAP coverage may have dates not included on the chart above. Visit your local county office for details.

For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local county FSA office.

Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA’s Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities.

The low-interest funds can be used to build or upgrade permanent facilities to store commodities. Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs, and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and loans between \$50,000 and \$100,000 may require additional security. Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

To learn more about the FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact your local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Clearing Wooded Areas, Draining, or Bringing New Land Into Production

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer’s federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings, and to make farm improvements.

The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is \$300,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer's ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Please contact your local FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

Communication is Key in Lending

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is committed to providing our farm loan borrowers the tools necessary to be a success. A part of ensuring this success is providing guidance and counsel from the loan application process through the borrower's graduation to commercial lending institutions. While it is FSA's commitment to advise borrowers as they identify goals and evaluate progress, it is crucial for borrowers to communicate with their farm loan staff when changes occur. It is the borrower's responsibility to alert FSA to any of the following:

- Any proposed or significant changes in the farming operation;
- Any significant changes to family income or expenses;
- The development of problem situations;
- Any losses or proposed significant changes in security

In addition, if a farm loan borrower cannot make payments to suppliers, other creditors, or FSA on time, contact your farm loan staff immediately to discuss loan servicing options.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Participation in NASS Agriculture Census Crucial to Infrastructure, Education, Technology and More

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is mailing the 2017 Census of Agriculture to approximately three million U.S. producers (mailing runs from mid-November through late December). Many producers don't realize how answering, or not answering, NASS surveys and questionnaires directly impacts them, their communities, or their industries. Even if producers do not use the results themselves or take advantage of USDA or other agriculture programs and services that rely on the data, everyone is affected by rural development. Data collected from the survey affects how resources are directed to such things as roads, internet access, veteran health clinics, agribusiness set-up, disaster relief, and much more.

In addition to being used by policymakers, the data also justifies research and the development of new technologies. Census data are also used to determine where there should be agriculture education in schools and to simply promote the importance of agriculture among non-agricultural neighbors.

This year, NASS will collect new information, including data on active duty and military veteran farmers, as well as expanded questions about food marketing practices.

When farmers receive the census forms, they can complete the questionnaire either online through an improved, user-friendly system (calculates totals automatically and skips questions that do not pertain to that operation), or they may still complete the questionnaire and submit it via mail.

Census responses are due by February 5, 2018. The results will be available beginning in February 2019 in aggregate form only to ensure that no individual operation or producer can be identified as required by federal law.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call Greg Matli at 765-414-1157.

Important NASS Survey - County Agricultural Production Survey

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is conducting an important survey this fall/winter; the County Agricultural Production Survey. Data from the survey will be used to establish final 2017 county average yields for corn and soybeans.

This survey can have a direct impact on farmers because USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) use the NASS county yields to determine the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC-CO) insurance payments and administer disaster assistance programs.

Selected farmers will receive a questionnaire in the mail. NASS offers a secure online response system. Responding online is the easiest, fastest and safest way to complete the survey and it saves taxpayer dollars too. Farmers can also respond by mail, telephone, or personal interview. **Remember** if NASS doesn't get enough farmers to respond in a county, then the county yield will not be published.

The deadline to report for the County Agricultural Production Survey is January 12, 2018.

Corn and soybean county estimates will be released on February 22, 2018 on the NASS website.

Thank you for participating in NASS surveys and for supporting U.S. agriculture.

Dates to Remember

Continuing through August 1, 2018: Enrollment for 2018 Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs

December 25: Offices closed in observance of Christmas Day

January 1: Offices closed in observance of New Year's Day

January 2: Reporting date for 2018 honeybee colonies/honey for all FSA programs

January 15: Reporting date for 2018 acreage for apples

January 15: Offices closed in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday

January 30: Deadline to apply for 2017 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and 2017 Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)

January 31: Deadline to file Tree Assistance Program (TAP) application

February 2: Deadline to apply for Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) for unshorn pelts produced during the 2017 crop year

February 15: NAP buy-up premiums due

February 19: Offices closed in observance of George Washington's Birthday

March 15: NAP application closing date for annual spring/summer planted crops not limited to: beans, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, canola, cantaloupes, carrots, cauliflower, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, greens, herbs, honeydew, lettuce, oats, okra, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, sorghum, squash, tomatillos, tomatoes, and watermelon

March 31: Final date to obtain loans or Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP's) on 2017 harvested small grains

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).