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South Carolina FSA December Newsletter

South Carolina Farm Service Agency

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USDA Encourages SC Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Crop Sales Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency encourages producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP to include higher levels of protection. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage, as well as discounted premiums for additional levels of protection."

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available,

State Executive Director: W. Jack Nettles, Acting	including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.
Administrative Officer: Toni Turner	USDA has partnered with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois to create an online tool at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap that allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for their operation. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production, with higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers.
Farm Programs Chief: Amy Turner	
Farm Loan Programs Chief: Frank Sligh	
Office Holiday Closures Dec. 24 - Closing at 12:30pm	Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. To learn more about NAP visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to http://offices.usda.gov .
Dec. 25 - Closed	Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/# .
Jan. 1 - Closed	Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx , to predict insurance premium costs.
Producers can contact their local FSA Office for more information or to schedule an appointment.	

SC Producers are Reminded to Complete NASS Crop Surveys

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Field Offices are currently completing 2015 small grain yield surveys and will contact growers in December to complete row crop yield surveys. If you are one of the producers contacted to complete a 2015 yield survey, we encourage your participation and cooperation as many USDA agencies including the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) use the NASS yield data for their programs.

FSA uses NASS county yield data for farm credit, conservation, disaster programs, loan and commodity programs. Under the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA uses the NASS county yield data to calculate Agriculture Risk Coverage – County (ARC-CO) benchmark revenues and current year county revenues. For example, the 2014 NASS county yield, along with the crop's marketing year average price (MYA), are used to determine the county's current year revenue to determine if the county will trigger an ARC-CO payment. An ARC-CO payment is triggered for a county when the current year revenue falls below the guarantee revenue for the crop and crop year. In cases where NASS county yield data is not available, the FSA State Committee must determine a county yield using RMA yield data or the best available yield data, including assigning a county yield using neighboring county yields from NASS or RMA.

Any information that producers provide to NASS is kept confidential and protected by federal law. NASS publishes only aggregate-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified. All reports will be available at www.nass.usda.gov.

USDA Removes Farm Program Payments to Managers Not Actively Engaged in Farming

USDA finalized a rule to ensure that farm safety-net payments are issued only to active managers of farms that operate as joint ventures or general partnerships, consistent with the direction and authority provide by Congress in the 2014 Farm Bill. The action, which exempts family farm operations, closes a loophole where individuals who were not actively part of farm management still received payments.

Since 1987, the broad definition of “actively engaged” resulted in some general partnerships and joint ventures adding managers to the farming operation, qualifying for more payments, that did not substantially contribute to management. The rule applies to operations seeking more than one farm manager, and requires measureable, documented hours and key management activities each year. Some operations of certain sizes and complexity may be allowed up to three qualifying managers under limited conditions. The changes apply to payments for 2016 and subsequent crop years for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) Programs, Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP) and Marketing Loan Gains (MLG) realized via the Marketing Assistance Loan program.

As required by Congress, the new rule does not apply to family farms, or change regulations related to contributions of land, capital, equipment, or labor. The changes go into effect for the 2016 crop year for most farms. Farms that have already planted fall crops for 2016 have until the 2017 crop year to comply. For more details, producers are encouraged to consult their local Farm Service Agency office.

USDA Offers Flood Impacted SC Farmers and Ranchers Immediate Disaster Assistance

Farm Service Agency Stands Ready to Assist Agricultural Producers Slammed by Recent Heavy Rains

SC Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers across the state of federal farm program benefits that may be available to help eligible producers recover from recent heavy rains and flooding.

FSA offers disaster assistance and low-interest loan programs to assist agricultural producers in their recovery efforts following floods or similar qualifying natural disasters. Available programs and loans include:

- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** - provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters (includes native grass for grazing). Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2015 crops.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible losses may include those determined by FSA to have been caused by hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, tropical storms, tornados lightening, extreme heat, and extreme cold. Producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.

- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disaster.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs. ELAP covers physically damaged or destroyed livestock feed that was purchased or mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs intended for use as feed for the **producer's** eligible livestock. In order to be considered eligible, harvested forage must be baled; forage that is only cut, raked or windrowed is not eligible. Producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent. ELAP also covers up to 150 lost grazing days in instances when a producer has been forced to remove livestock from a grazing pasture due to floodwaters. For beekeepers, ELAP covers beehive losses (the physical structure) in instances where the hive has been destroyed by a natural disaster including flooding, high winds and tornadoes.
- **Emergency Loan Program** – Available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous **Secretarial Disaster designation**. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding.
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; includes fence loss.
- **HayNet** - is an Internet-based Hay and Grazing Net Ad Service allowing farmers and ranchers to share 'Need Hay' ads and 'Have Hay' ads online. Farmers also can use another feature to post advertisements for grazing land, specifically ads announcing the availability of grazing land or ads requesting a need for land to graze. www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet.

To establish or retain FSA program eligibility, farmers and ranchers must report prevented planting and failed acres (crops and grasses). Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

For more information on disaster assistance programs and loans visit www.fsa.usda.gov/ or contact your local FSA Office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Farmers to Receive Documentation of USDA Services

Local Offices Issue Receipts for Services Provided

Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds agricultural producers that FSA provides a receipt to customers who request or receive assistance or information on FSA programs.

As part of FSA's mission to provide enhanced customer service, producers who visit FSA will receive documentation of services requested and provided. From December through June, FSA issued more than 327,000 electronic receipts.

The 2014 Farm Bill requires a receipt to be issued for any agricultural program assistance requested from FSA, the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development (RD). Receipts include the date, summary of the visit and any agricultural information, program and/or loan assistance provided to an individual or entity.

In some cases, a form or document – such as a completed and signed program enrollment form – serve as the customer receipt instead of a printed or electronic receipt. A service is any information, program or loan assistance provided whether through a visit, email, fax or letter.

To learn more about FSA, visit www.fsa.usda.gov or to find your local USDA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency

USDA Can Help You Make Your Rural Business, Farm or Ranch More Profitable

USDA is offering grants and loan guarantees to help rural businesses and agricultural producers reduce their energy costs and consumption.

The funding is being provided through USDA Rural Development's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Loans and grants are available to install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.

Renewable energy systems include solar, wind, geothermal, anaerobic digesters, renewable biomass, hydrogen and hydropower.

Energy efficiency improvements include lighting, refrigeration, facility improvements (such as adding insulation or replacing windows), heating and cooling upgrades, motor replacements and automated control upgrades.

Grants of up to 25% of a project's total costs are available. The maximum grants are \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements and \$500,000 for renewable energy systems

Loans guarantees of up to 75% of a project's total costs are available.

- The minimum loan amount is \$5,000
- The maximum loan amount is \$25 million

Some areas contiguous with Columbia, Charleston, and Greenville are not eligible. Please call for a determination.

Don't miss this great opportunity!

For more information, contact: Doug Dunkelberg, doug.dunkelberg@sc.usda.gov 803-765-5881 or Jesse T. Risher, jesse.risher@sc.usda.gov 803-765-5881

NRCS Extends Deadline for Communities to Apply for EWP Program

The new application deadline is February 29, 2016

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) extended the deadline for South Carolina communities seeking financial and technical assistance to protect eligible infrastructure such as roads, bridges, houses, and businesses damaged by the state's historic rainfall in early October and continues to pose threats to life and property. The new deadline is Feb. 29, 2016.

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program is designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences in watersheds. The EWP Program is used for projects sponsored by a legal subdivision of state government such as a city, county, state agency, town, or a federally-recognized American Indian tribe or tribal organization.

For more information, please see the entire news release here:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/sc/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD423093>

Big Crowds Expected for SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo

Organizers of the SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo set for Jan. 13-14 at the Florence Civic Center in Florence, S.C. are expecting big crowds as farmers plan for a challenging 2016.

"There is something for everyone involved in the agricultural industry or you may simply want to learn more about our great industry. You will see everything from antiques tractors to agricultural drones and everything in between," said Expo Executive Director Jody Martin, who urges anyone interested in agriculture to attend.

South Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers said year after year, the expo has been an exceptional event for showcasing South Carolina agriculture and educating farmers and others about the newest production practices. "You can gain insight into the latest technology and agricultural innovations while networking with trade show exhibitors and other agribusiness leaders. I encourage you to take advantage of this exciting opportunity – you won't be disappointed," Weathers said.

The theme of this year's Expo is "Efficiency and Effectiveness on the Farm." Martin stressed that the expo will include sessions that will benefit all farmers. Admission is \$5 per day.

Among the educational topics covered are:

- Managing Price and Production Risk in Tough Times
- Optimization Clinics on Sprayers, Hay Equipment and Precision Ag
- Data Driven Farming – Making Farm Data Work for You
- Lessons from Soil Health Studies

Small and beginning farmers are an important part of the expo and the Small Farmer Symposium will include educational sessions targeted directly to their needs. The Cattle Clinic will focus on heifer management and a market outlook.

A key part of the expo is the CAMM Conference where speakers from Clemson's Confined Animal Manure Manager program team will discuss the benefits of using animal manure to grow crops for on-farm bio diesel and how to make biodiesel from crops grown with manure. This conference will offer five CAMM credit hours.

"The expo will have educational sessions, 140 plus agricultural exhibitors, both inside and outside, and other opportunities to connect with key agricultural leaders that will help every farmer who attends. We have a lot to offer and look forward to a big crowd," Martin said.

For more information access, the expo website at www.SCAgriBizExpo.com.

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