

November 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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South Carolina Farm Service Agency Newsletter

South Carolina Farm Service Agency

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State Executive Director:
Boone Peeler

A Message from the State Executive Director

I am writing to you today in my new capacity as the State Executive Director of the South Carolina Farm Service Agency (FSA). It is my honor and privilege to have the opportunity to work with and for you, our state's farmers, ranchers and agricultural land owners.

I am a 4th generation dairy farmer who previously worked in state government with the Department of Health and Human Services. I am excited for the opportunity to now lead the South Carolina FSA as it works to provide programs for you and our fellow farmers throughout the state.

State Committee:

Robert Battle, Chairperson
 Warren Dixon
 Mary Frances Koon
 Don Sharp

In this edition of GovDelivery, you'll note that even as your 2017 production season winds down, South Carolina FSA is looking ahead to next season. Enrollment is already open for the main farm bill safety net programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), for coverage in 2018. See the article below for more information.

Administrative Officer:

Toni Turner

If you are considering taking out a Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) on any crops for the 2017 calendar year, you'll want to get to your county office to start that process sooner rather than later. For more information on what you need to know, please take a look at the article below.

Farm Programs Chief:

Amy Turner

Farm Loan Programs Chief:

William Shelley

That's all I've got for this month. Best wishes as you wrap things up for 2017 and begin the preparations for 2018.

Producers can contact their [local FSA Office](#) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

--Boone Peeler

Enrollment Period Open for Safety Net Coverage in 2018

Important Dates and Deadlines:

December 25: Offices Closed for Christmas Day

January 1: Offices Closed for New Year's Day

January 2: Final Crop Reporting Date for Honey (also Bee Colonies)

January 15: Final Reporting Date for the following Crops:
 Apples
 Blueberries
 Canola
 Peaches
 Fall-Seeded Small Grains

FSA has announced that farmers and ranchers with base acres in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) safety net program may begin enrolling 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. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Marketing Assistance Available for 2017 Crops

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs).

Producers should become familiar with the process to access this assistance.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for commodities such as feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

A producer who is eligible to obtain an MAL, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

To be eligible for an MAL or an LDP, producers must have a beneficial interest in the commodity, in addition to other requirements. A producer retains beneficial interest when control of and title to the commodity is maintained. For an LDP, the producer must retain beneficial interest in the commodity from the time of planting through the date the producer filed [Form CCC-633EZ \(page 1\)](#) in the FSA County Office. For more information, producers should contact their local FSA county office or view the [LDP Fact Sheet](#).

SC Producers Reminded of Approaching Deadline to Submit Ballots for Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) SC Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers that FSA county committee elections began Nov. 6, with the mailing of ballots. Eligible voters must return ballots to their local FSA offices by Dec. 4, 2017, to ensure that their vote is counted. Producers who have not received their ballot should pick one up at their local FSA office.

Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 4, 2017. Newly elected committee members will take office Jan. 1, 2018.

Nearly 7,700 FSA county committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs, conservation programs, indemnity and disaster programs, and emergency programs and eligibility.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Approximately 1.5 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

For more information, visit the FSA website at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. You may also contact your local USDA service center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

USDA Processing Pending Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment Offers

Acceptance of Most 2018 Offers Temporarily Suspended

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will process many pending eligible offers for land enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and will temporarily suspend accepting most new offers until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

All current, eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, 2017, except for those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative (CP42), will be approved. Additionally, FSA is

temporarily suspending acceptance of most offers going forward to provide time to review CRP allocation levels, and to avoid exceeding the statutory cap of 24 million acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide. USDA is accepting all pending continuous enrollment offers that were made beginning on May 4, 2017, and extending through Sept. 30, 2017, except Pollinator Habitat Initiative offers. Pollinator acreage offers are being declined because the program has met its acreage enrollment goal. Effective immediately, USDA is suspending acceptance of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017. The suspension will continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for CRP Grasslands enrollment. Offers received on or after Oct. 1, 2017, are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Payment totals for 2017 were announced earlier this week totaling over \$1.6 billion.

For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Breaking New Ground

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.

Filing a Notice of Loss

The CCC-576, Notice of Loss, is used to report failed acreage and prevented planting and may be completed by any producer with an interest in the crop. Timely filing a Notice of Loss is required for all crops including grasses. For losses on crops covered by the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), you must file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, in the FSA County Office within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent or 15 calendar days after the normal harvest date.

Producers of hand-harvested crops must notify FSA of damage or loss through the administrative County Office within 72 hours of the date of damage or loss first becomes apparent. This notification can be provided by filing a CCC-576, email, fax or phone. Producers who notify the County Office by any method other than by filing the CCC-576 are still required to file a CCC-576, Notice of Loss, within the required 15 calendar days.

If filing for prevented planting, an acreage report and CCC-576 must be filed within 15 calendar days of the final planting date for the crop.

Loan Servicing

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

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.

Embracing SC's Number One Industry – AGRICULTURE

Agriculture and agribusiness in the state of South Carolina represents the number one industry, accounting for \$41.7 billion in economic impact based on 2013 data. Agriculture and forestry also provide over 200,000 jobs for individuals. What tremendous facts and what a tremendous effect agriculture has in our state.

Ag is a powerful force in SC and what better place to celebrate and learn more about the future of agriculture in South Carolina, than at the Sixth Annual, SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo. Make plans to attend January 17 – 18 at the Florence Civic Center in Florence, SC. New this year, admission and parking will be **FREE !!!**

On Wednesday, January 17th the expo opens early with a farmers only Farmer Appreciation Breakfast, followed by a general session with keynote speakers providing updates, pending ag enhancements which will affect your operation, and forthcoming changes which will effect the industry.

The Field Crops Track will be a highlight this year, with several presentations you will want to attend to enhance your operation. To name a few: “Ag Outlook & Marketing Session” and time with four outstanding young farmers who will share information about how the “New Generation of Farmers are Embracing Technology” to grow their operations, increase yields and reduce operating expenses.

On Wednesday afternoon, a training session will be conducted on “Worker Protection Standards” and you will be able to receive the required educational training credits hours needed by every agriculture employer. If you hire pesticide handlers or have ag workers exposed to pesticides, then this session will be of great interest to you. New regulations, record keeping requirements, AEZ zone, medical clearance & respirator fit testing and annual training of workers and handlers will be included in this session. This session will address much of the new required material, including the new Safety Poster that must be displayed.

On Thursday, January 18th, the general session keynote speaker will present an informative session entitled, “Promoting Agriculture & Farm Bill Update”. Afterwards, you will want to hear Dr. Ron Heiniger of NC State and Kevin Matthews, local NC farmer and award winning yield producer, provide first hand information and experiences regarding yield-breaking production of soybeans and corn. These two sessions will be well worth your time to learn more about “Soybeans that Yield like Corn” and “Amazing Corn Yields-Achieving the Impossible by Meeting Plant Needs”.

Along with the Field Crop Track, CAMM (Certified Animal Manure Management) classes will be held on Thursday, January 18th. These classes will provide the opportunity to gain four hours of certification credits.

The Fruit and Vegetable Track, as well as the Women in Ag Track will be available to enhance your education in agriculture. More information will follow in future articles providing more details. Also visit the SC AgriBiz website at scagribizexpo.com for more information.

As always, for lots of fun, join your ag friends and connect with others on Wednesday evening for the “Taste of SC”. Then on Thursday morning, make plans to support the Commissioner’s School at the annual Commissioner’s Breakfast.

For details on all the programming and to purchase tickets for the “Taste of SC” and the Commissioner’s Breakfast, visit the website at scagbizexpo.com. We know you will not want to miss the Ag Expo. Be present for all the activities and connect with the ag community!

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).