



NEBRASKA FSA NEWS



December 2016

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Hours
Monday – Friday
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For More Information

For more information about any of the programs listed in this newsletter, your best resource is your local FSA County Office. To find a County Office near you, or to see more information about FSA programming, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.

Visit County FSA Offices Now To Plan for Upcoming Season

Welcome to the winter edition of the Nebraska FSA News. I hope that this message finds you – our state’s farmers and ranchers – with some time to begin the process of planning for the 2017 production season. It’s never too early to start, and in the current marketing climate, thoughtful deliberation is critical.

We at the Nebraska Farm Service Agency (FSA) recognize we have a role in your planning process. Our farm programs, farm loan programs, conservation programs and even emergency programs all should be considered as you think about 2017. I encourage you to take some time to stop into your local county office now and discuss with FSA staff the various program options. There is a great deal we can work on now, while it’s cold out and the tractors are parked, to get you organized for next season.

For example, enrollment already is open for

the ARC/PLC safety-net programs for 2017 commodity crops. These programs played an important part in supporting the state’s ag economy this year. While we would prefer to see market prices increase, and payments not trigger, it’s good to be prepared in the event they stay low. The article below provides you with program details.

In 2016 Nebraska FSA’s loan program funding reached its highest point in at least the past 30 years. Our direct loan and guaranteed loan farm operating and ownership programs are particularly useful in troubling financial times, when credit from the traditional banking sector is difficult to secure.

* See: *Visit County Offices, Page 10*



Dan Steinkruger
State Executive Director

Enrollment Open for ARC, PLC Safety Net

Producers who chose coverage from the safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit FSA county offices now through Aug. 1, 2017, to sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2017.

ARC and PLC program payments issued in Nebraska in October 2016, for the 2015 crop, totaled over \$656 million. Farmers enrolled about 85,000 farms in the two programs.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is complete and remains in effect

through 2018, producers still must enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to ensure it reflects the producers who currently share in the crop and the base acreage. It’s important for producers to report any changes to their farming operation or interests throughout the year so FSA farm records, acreage reports, program applications and contracts are accurate. This action is necessary for producers to maintain eligibility for program benefits.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appoint-

* See: *ARC/PLC, Page 9*

Loan Programs

Direct, Guaranteed Loan Programs Offer Producers Options

New EZ Guarantee tailored to assist more small-scale, beginning and urban farmers

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 also can 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. Op-

erating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

GUARANTEED LOANS

FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan.

Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes. Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt. Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to \$1,399,000. 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.

EZ GUARANTEE LOANS

FSA now has a streamlined version of USDA guaranteed loans, tailored for smaller scale farms and urban producers. The program, called EZ Guarantee Loans, uses a simplified application process to help beginning, small, underserved and family farmers and ranchers apply for loans of up to \$100,000 from USDA-approved lenders to purchase farmland or finance agricultural operations.

USDA also has a new category of lenders that will join traditional lenders, such as banks and credit unions, in offering USDA EZ Guarantee Loans. Micro-lenders, which include Community Development Financial Institutions and Rural Rehabilitation Corporations, will be able to offer their customers up to \$50,000 of EZ Guarantee Loans. Banks, credit unions and other traditional USDA -approved lenders, can offer customers up to \$100,000 to help with agricultural operation costs.

EZ Guarantee Loans offer low interest rates and terms up to seven years for financing operating expenses and 40 years for financing the purchase of farm real estate. USDA-approved lenders can issue these loans with the FSA guaranteeing the loan up to 95 percent.

Loan Servicing an Option During Financial Stress

There are options for FSA 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.

Microloans Developed with Small Farms in Mind

FSA developed the microloan option to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations. This loan option also will be useful to specialty crop producers and community supported agriculture (CSA) operators.

Operating microloans can be used to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses to extend the growing season, essential tools, irrigation and annual ex-

penses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing and distribution expenses.

Ownership microloans are available to help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements.

Microloans provide up to \$50,000 in loan assistance to qualified producers and are issued to the applicant directly from FSA.

USDA Changes Farm Storage Facility Loan Program Rules

The FSA Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program has undergone several recent changes to make it more accessible to farms of all types and sizes.

For example, the purchase of portable storage and handling equipment and trucks are now included as eligible items under the loan program. These items can be new or used.

The program also now includes a “microloan” option with lower down payments, designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets. The microloan option allows applicants seeking less than \$50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of 5 percent. Producers can self-certify the storage needs of the eligible commodity and are not required to demonstrate storage needs based on production history. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible.

Both changes are expected to be of particular benefit to small farms and ranches and specialty crop producers, who may not have access to commercial storage or on-farm storage after harvest. These producers can invest in equipment such as conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store com-

Traditional FSFL Program Still in Place

The FSFL program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum FSFL loan amount is \$500,000 per loan. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility, or permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years are available, depending on the amount of the loan.

FSFL security requirements have been eased for loans in the amount of \$100,000 and less.

modities before delivering them to markets. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply.

Also within the past year, FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities that are included in the FSFL program. Eligible commodities are: aquaculture, floriculture, fruits (including nuts) and vegetables, corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas, sugar, peanuts, barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass.

FSFL loans also can be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage.

All loan requests are subject to an environmental evaluation. Accepting delivery of equipment, or starting any site preparation or construction before loan approval may impede the successful completion of an environmental evaluation and may adversely affect loan eligibility.

FSA Offers Financing Opportunities for Beginning, Underserved Producers

FSA has a number of loan programs available to assist applicants to begin or continue in agriculture production. Loans are available for operating type loans and/or to purchase or improve farms or ranches.

While all qualified producers are eligible to apply for these loan programs, FSA has placed special emphasis on assisting beginning farmers and has provided priority funding for members of targeted underserved groups.

FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years;
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm;
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower train-

ing and financial management program sponsored by FSA; and

- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm.

A targeted underserved group is one whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic or gender prejudice because of his or her identity as members of the group without regard to his or her individual qualities.

For purposes of this program, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

* See: *Beginning Producers*, Page 10

Conservation Programs

CRP Enrollment Ongoing in 2017 Through Continuous Option

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, landowners enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.

The program, as mandated in the 2014 Farm Bill, cannot have more than 24 million acres enrolled in it. Nationally, 23.9 million acres currently are enrolled.

As of September, Nebraska had 782,000 acres enrolled in the program. That figure does not yet include all acres accepted into the program following a 2016 general CRP sign-up, a grassland CRP sign-up and ongoing continuous CRP sign-up throughout the year. In total, in fiscal year 2016, the Nebraska FSA was able to help the state's landowners enroll 104,531 acres into CRP through these

three sign-up options. These acres more than replaced the 63,104 acres within expiring CRP contracts.

At this time, since CRP is nearing the statutory national limit of 24 million acres, it is unknown whether there will be an opportunity in fiscal year 2017 to offer additional acres for general or grassland CRP enrollment. However, as of Oct. 1, 2016, landowners can consider enrollment in the program through Continuous CRP. There are two options:

- The applicant can make an offer of acres for enrollment on Oct. 1, 2017. With this option, landowners can enroll today and still farm those acres during the 2017 production season. Landowners with CRP contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2017, also can make offers under Continuous CRP at this time.
- The applicant can offer the acres for immediate enrollment. There will be a monthly review by USDA's nation-

al office of acres offered for Continuous CRP contracts, and that office will determine which contracts can move forward, keeping an eye on the 24 million acre cap.

Some of the eligible practices through CRP Continuous enrollment include grass waterways, filter strips, field windbreaks, quail buffers (field borders), pollination habitat, shelterbelts and wetland restoration.

Possible program payments include annual rental payments, signing incentive payments, cost-share for practice installation and practice incentive payments.

Landowners who are interested in learning more about Continuous CRP or CRP special initiatives should visit their local county FSA office. You also can learn more by viewing a CRP fact sheet by visiting the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

Continuous CRP Valuable Tool in Addressing Ephemeral Erosion Problem

Producers enrolled in federal safety-net programs like the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, as well as in the Risk Management Agency's crop insurance program, are reminded that conservation compliance is required in order to maintain program benefits. In particular, producers with acres determined by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to be Highly Erodible Land (HEL) are required to apply conservation tillage, crop residue levels and crop rotation practices as specified in their conservation plan.

Nebraska NRCS, with the assistance of Nebraska FSA and several other state and local partners, recently launched an initiative to address ephemeral erosion on HEL-determined acres. The groups are encouraging landowners to consider fed-



Above: An example of ephemeral erosion. Photo courtesy Nebraska NRCS. Below: An example of a grassed waterway under CCRP. Nebraska FSA photo.



eral, state and local resources that can aid them in installing appropriate conservation practices to help them reduce erosion and maintain conservation compliance.

FSA's Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) is one option for landowners to consider when addressing ephemeral erosion. Two practices under CCRP are designed to stop such erosion: Conservation Practice (CP) 8A, installation of a grass waterway; and CP 21, installation of a filter strip.

Landowners who are interested in learning more about how FSA's CCRP can help them address ephemeral erosion issues on HEL-classified soils are encouraged to contact their county FSA office.

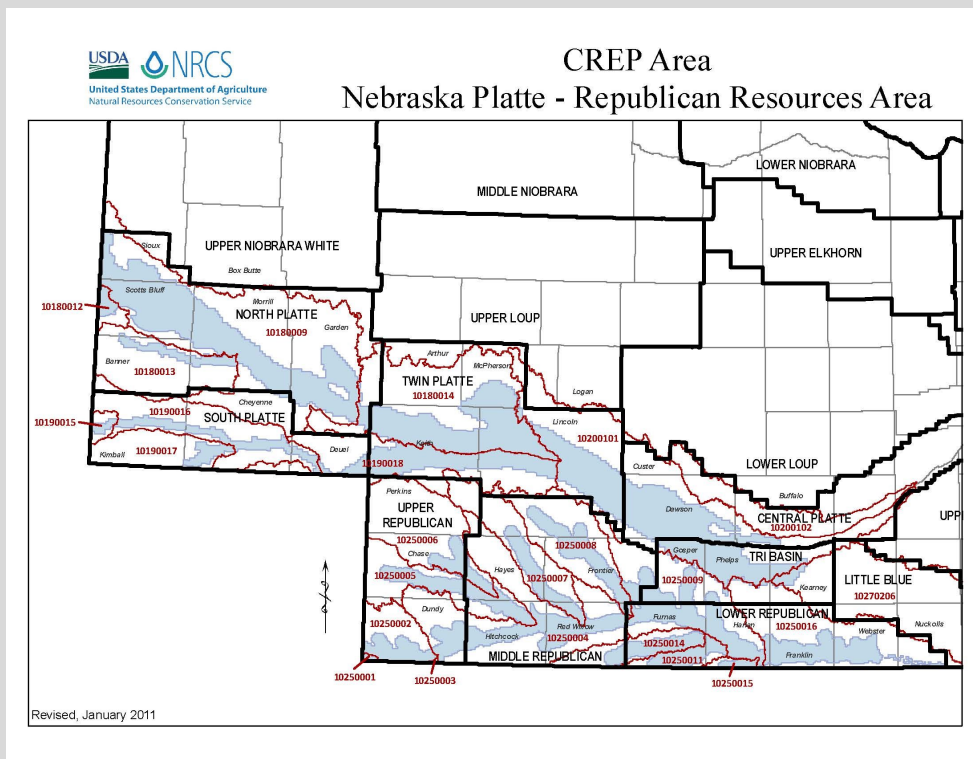
Conservation Programs

Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP Open for More Acres

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the State of Nebraska currently are taking applications for enrollment in the Platte-Republican Resources Area Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a voluntary program that is part of the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) operated by FSA. CREP allows states to develop projects with specific end goals, and its costs are shared between the federal government and state resources.

FSA and the State of Nebraska launched the Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP in 2005. It is designed to reduce irrigation water use, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat through the establishment of vegetative cover using approved CRP practices. It is available to landowners/farmers with property in specified areas of the Republican River Basin and the North Platte, South Platte and Platte River basins.

Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican River CREP, landowners are provided irrigated land rental payments to convert their irrigated crop land into CRP habitat. Up to 100,000 acres can be enrolled



The Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP now allows for re-enrollment of expiring contracts under this program, which was first approved in 2005. FSA also is accepting new enrollments for acres meeting the program criteria. Acres must be located within designated program areas, as outlined above. Producers should contact their county FSA office for more information.

in the project, with the contracts running from 10-15 years. At present, there are approximately 45,000 acres enrolled.

Landowners/farmers with questions about this program should contact their county FSA office for more information.

Management Required on CRP Acres to Help Prevent Spread of Wildfire

Prescribed burning an optional management tool

Landowners who participate in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are responsible for fire management on their CRP acreage. Fireguard technical practices should be outlined in the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO).

Landowners must complete the necessary management activities outside of the Primary Nesting Season. In Nebraska, the Primary Nesting Season is May 1 through July 15 for grazing benefits and for all other activities. The goal is to suppress the amount of fuel in the event of a wildfire, while still promoting the diversity of the conservation cover.

FSA encourages producers to be proactive in preventing the spread of wildfire. Fire management includes installing firebreaks, which should be included in the contract support document and installed according to NRCS firebreak standards.

Barren firebreaks will only be allowed in high risk areas, such as transportation corridors, rural communities, and adjacent farmsteads. A conservationist must certify that there will not be an erosion hazard from the barren firebreak. If erosion becomes a problem, remedial action will be taken.

Prescribed burning of CRP acres is different from fire management of CRP acres in that prescribed fire is considered a management activity option available under a landowner's CRP conservation plan. Requirements for a prescribed burn include a detailed burn plan and a burn permit issued by the local fire department.

This option will not be available everywhere in the state as local fire department policies may vary on issuing such permits. Landowners should check with their local FSA and NRCS offices before proceeding with this management option.

NAP: A Risk Management Tool for Grazing Lands, Specialty Crops

Varying application deadlines mean producers should consult county office for information

FSA reminds producers to review available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage.

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP, administered by FSA, covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy and

industrial crops.

Crops that have NAP sales closing dates prior to the end of 2016 include: apples, asparagus, cherries, Christmas trees, grapes, honey, nursery crops, plums, rye, speltz, strawberries, triticale, turfgrass sod, fall-seeded wheat and value loss crops.

It's important to note that even if the NAP sales closing date for a particular crop has passed, producers may still be able to receive coverage so they should contact their local FSA office.

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 pro-

tection 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 available, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for additional NAP coverage.

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/#>.

For more information on NAP, service fees, premiums and sales deadlines, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

With Low Commodity Prices, Producers Should Gain Understanding of MAL, LDP Policy

The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized 2014-2018 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs), with a few minor policy changes. As prices for Nebraska's wheat crop triggered LDPs in 2016, producers should ensure they understand these changes.

Among the changes, farm-stored MAL collateral transferred to warehouse storage will retain the original loan rate, be allowed to transfer only the outstanding farm-stored quantity with no additional quantity allowed and will no longer require producers to have a paid for measurement service when moving or commingling loan collateral.

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans, and other oilseeds, pulse crops, wool and honey. MALs provide producers interim financing after harvest to help them meet cash flow needs with-



out having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2016 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest.

Before MAL repayments with a market loan gain or LDP disbursements can be made,

producers must meet the requirements of actively engaged in farming, cash rent tenant and member contribution.

Commodity certificates are available to loan holders who have outstanding nonrecourse loans for wheat, feed grains, pulse crops (dry peas, lentils, large and small chickpeas), wool, soybeans and designated minor oilseeds. These certificates can be

* See: MAL, LDP Page 11

LIP Assists When Adverse Weather Strikes, Including Blizzards, Extreme Cold

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2017, eligible losses must have occurred on or after Jan. 1, 2017, and before December 31, 2017. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year for which benefits are requested:

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Normal mortality must have occurred on or before the eligible loss condition to be included in the application. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2017 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent or by March 31, 2018
- An application for payment by March 31, 2018

Additional information can be found at: www.fsa.usda.gov/ne under the “programs” tab.

Notice of Loss Filing Needed for Failed Acres, Prevented Planting

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 the CCC-576 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.

ELAP Assistance An Option for Losses of Livestock, Honeybees, Farm-Raised Fish Due to Disease, Weather, Other Conditions

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible livestock losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, and additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought.

Eligible honeybee losses include loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, cost of

additional feed purchased above normal quantities due to an eligible adverse weather condition, colony losses in excess of normal mortality due to an eligible weather event or loss condition, including CCD, and hive losses due to eligible adverse weather.

Eligible farm-raised fish losses include death losses in excess of normal mortality and/or loss of purchased feed due to an eligible adverse weather event.

Producers who suffer eligible livestock, honeybee or farm-raised fish losses from October 1, 2016, to September 30, 2017, must file:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by November 1, 2017

* See: ELAP, Page 10

Acres Reporting a Requirement to Retain Program Benefits

Late-file provisions available for fall-seeded, perennial crops

In order to comply with FSA program eligibility requirements, all producers must file an accurate crop certification report by the applicable deadline.

For Nebraska, the acres reporting date for 2017 spring-seeded crops, such as corn and soybeans, is July 15, 2017. Acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) must also be certified to FSA by this date.

The deadline to report fall-seeded and perennial forage crops for the 2017 crop year was Nov. 15, 2016. If these crops were not reported timely with FSA, they can still be reported, though late-filing requirements must be met. Late-filing provisions include an FSA representative physically verifying the late-filed crop and the producer paying a late-filed measurement service fee.

The following exceptions apply to the above acres reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the above acres reporting date, then the acres must be reported no

later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.

- If a producer acquires additional acres after the above acres reporting date, then the acres 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 acres must be reported by July 15th.

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

FSA requires that a producer’s report of acres and specific crop data be provided on a map showing FSA’s field boundaries and acres. In most cases, FSA provides producers with a map of their farming interest representing that crop year.



To ensure an accurate acres report is filed, producers are reminded to review the map to verify the field boundaries are accurately delineated. Producers should notify FSA of any changes or corrections needed prior to filing the acres report with FSA.

Producers Encouraged to Update Name, Address, Farm Operation Changes to Preserve Eligibility

FSA is cleaning up its producer record database. Program participants should report any changes of address or zip code, or an incorrect name or business name on file.

Changes in a farm operation, like the addition of a farm by lease or purchase, also need to be reported. A copy of the deed or recorded land contract for purchased property is needed to maintain

accurate records with FSA. Failure to do so can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties.

These changes should be reported timely to the County Committee in writing and should be updated on the CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan.

Please call your local FSA office with changes.

FSAFarm+ Available for Secure, Online Access to Farm Records

Farmers and ranchers can access their

FSA farm information from the convenience of their home computer. The customer self-service portal, known as FSAFarm+, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data.

Producers can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

To learn more, or begin the enrollment process, visit www.fsa.usda.gov, and click on FSAFarm+ under the Online Services tab.

Farmers Reminded of Conservation Requirements

Farmers are encouraged to consult with FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (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 conservation tillage, crop residue levels and crop rotation 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. Actions such as clearing any trees to create new cropland will need to be reviewed.

Landowners and operators must 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 the NRCS for further review is necessary.

ACRSI Streamlines Acreage Reporting Process

Farmers and ranchers filing crop acreage reports with FSA and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) now can provide the common information from their acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

However, producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program-specific information.

The data-sharing process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This inter-agency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected

from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs. Once a producer files at one location, data that's important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location, avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting, as well as saving farmers and ranchers time.

More than 93 percent of all annually reported acres to FSA and RMA are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops.

The common data from the first-filed acreage report will be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report. Plans are under way at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Structural Changes in Farm Operations May Impact Payments

FSA recognizes that many producers seek advice from professionals including attorneys and tax experts when it comes to planning structural changes in their farming operation. Such changes may be suggested for the purpose of succession planning, tax planning, or to limit liability exposure. Examples include a traditional husband and wife operation transitioning to a corporation, member changes within a general partnership, and any other change to the operation which alters the type of entity or number of people involved.

While producers have many reasons for considering such a change to their farm operation, farm program rules limit FSA's ability to recognize changes to operations which increase the possible number of payment limitations from the previous operation structure when there is no other substantive change to the operation.

This rule, known as the substantive change rule, provides specific criteria that must be met in order for these changes and additional payment limitations to be recognized when an operation changes its organizational structure from a prior year.

Failing to meet substantive change rules may result in an operation being ineligible for payment or restricted in the number of payment limitations it can receive. Producers are encouraged to consider these implications when planning changes to their operation and visit their local FSA office for more information.

** From: ARC/PLC, Page 1*

ment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues continue to fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. The two pro-

grams 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. There are a number of covered commodities, including barley, corn, grain sorghum, oats, dry peas, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. For more details, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

Producers Reminded That NASS Survey Important for FSA, RMA Programs

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Field Office in Lincoln has distributed to producers surveys regarding acreage, yield and production estimates for row crop and hay for 2016. The surveys went out in mid-October, and NASS officials will be following up with producers to encourage completion through mid-January.

If you are one of the producers contacted

to complete a survey, FSA encourages your participation as many USDA agencies, including FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA), use the NASS data for programs. For example, under the 2014 Farm Bill, FSA uses the NASS data to calculate Agriculture Risk Coverage – County (ARC-CO) benchmark revenues and current year county revenues. 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.

Information provided to NASS is kept confidential and protected by federal law.

NASS publishes only aggregate-level data.

Help is a Phone Call Away

Farmers, ranchers and rural residents who are experiencing stressful times can seek confidential referral and support services by calling the Rural Response Hotline. Call 800-464-0258.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture also offers support through its Negotiations Program by providing mediation services for agricultural borrows, creditors and USDA program participants, as well as free one-on-one education on agricultural financial and legal matters. Call 800-446-4071 or visit www.negotiations.nebraska.gov.

** From: Beginning Producers, Page 3*

FSA loans are only available to applicants who meet all the eligibility requirements and are unable to obtain the needed credit elsewhere.

For more information on program provisions specific to beginners or underserved farmers, visit with your county FSA loan manager or officer at your county FSA office.

To find an office near you, go to: www.fsa.usda.gov/ne and click on the County Offices tab on the left.

** From: ELAP, Page 7*

- An application for payment by November 1, 2017

The Farm Bill caps ELAP disaster funding at \$20 million per federal fiscal year. The following ELAP Fact Sheets (by topic) are available online:

- ELAP for Farm-Raised Fish Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Livestock Fact Sheet
- ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet

To view these FSA program fact sheets, visit the FSA fact sheet web page at www.fsa.usda.gov/factsheets.

** From: Visit County Offices, Page 1*

We also continue to support beginning, veteran and underserved producers through these and other FSA programs.

In the past year, USDA has announced new, or modifications to, several loan programs. In particular, the Farm Storage Facility Loan program was expanded in a way to assist small- and mid-sized farms, as well as specialty crop farms. The EZ Loan Guarantee Program, announced in October, is designed to help beginning, small and underserved producers with a simplified application process to access loans up to \$100,000.

We are proud that our loan staff can work with you and your banker or financial adviser on financing options. Please take a look in this edition at the various articles that outline our farm loan program options.

Before I close, I want to call attention to the Conservation Section of this newsletter. In it you'll find an article that ex-

plains options for enrolling farmland in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). While this program is nearing its cap regarding the number of acres that can be enrolled nationally, there is still an option to enroll some acres, under certain practices, through Continuous CRP. Practices, such as filter strips and grass waterways, provide environmental benefits related to erosion control and water quality. This option is especially important to consider as many USDA programs have conservation compliance requirements and procedures.

This edition of Nebraska FSA News is published in an effort to assist you in the operation of your farm or ranch. Please take time to read it, and don't hesitate to contact any of our 71 offices with questions.

Sincerely,



Miscellaneous

Dates to Remember

Dec. 5, 2016	Deadline to return ballots for County Committee Election to USDA Service Center
Dec. 16, 2016	Deadline to register and elect buy-up coverage for 2017 Dairy Margin Protection Program
Jan. 2, 2017	2017 initial reports for honeybee colonies and locations
Jan. 15, 2017	2016 NAP premium billing mailed
Jan. 31, 2017	2016 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for unshorn pelts and wool
March 15, 2017	2017 NAP sales closing date for alfalfa, mixed forage, spring-seeded annual crops, grass, sorghum forage. For additional crops with a March 15, 2017, sales closing date, contact your local FSA office.
March 31, 2017	Deadline to file supporting documents for 2016 Livestock Indemnity Program applications
March 31, 2017	2016 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, wheat and sesame seed
May 31, 2017	2016 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans and sunflower seed
July 15, 2017	Deadline to report all spring-seeded crops, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage
Aug. 1, 2017	Enrollment period for 2017 ARC/PLC ends

** From: MAL, LDP, Page 6*

purchased at the posted county price for the quantity of commodity under loan, and must be immediately exchanged for the collateral, satisfying the loan. MALs redeemed with commodity certificates are not subject to the actively engaged in farming, cash-rent tenant, Adjusted Gross Income provisions or the payment limitation.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, producers must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at their local FSA office before losing beneficial interest in the

crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

The 2014 Farm Bill also establishes payment limitations per individual or entity not to exceed \$125,000 annually on certain commodities for the following program benefits: Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program payments, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program payments, marketing loan gains (MLGs) and LDPs. These payment limitations do not apply to MAL loan disbursements or redemptions using

commodity certificate exchange. Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions were modified by the 2014 Farm Bill, which states that a producer whose total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000 is not eligible to receive a MLG or LDP. Producers must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information, please visit a nearby USDA Service Center or FSA's website www.fsa.usda.gov.

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If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

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