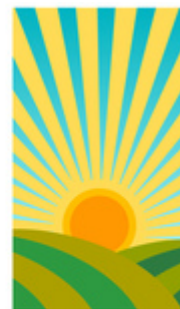


May 2017



Farm Service Agency

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NEWSLETTER

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Nebraska FSA Newsletter

Nebraska Farm Service Agency

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State Executive Director:
Mike Sander, Acting

State Committee:
Susan Frazier, Chair
Fred Christensen
Leo Hoehn

A Message from the Acting State Executive Director

It's May and tractors can be seen running up and down the fields in a race against the weather that only folks with their roots firmly planted in rural America can appreciate. Farmers are making good progress on planting the 2017 crop, with USDA reporting 87 percent of the corn and 52 percent of the soybeans planted in the state, essentially on track with last year.

The good news is such planting occurred between rains, which in some parts of the state wiped away drought conditions that were building. Let's hope

Linda Kleinschmidt
Roy Stoltenberg

we can continue to receive moisture in timely, reasonably-measured amounts this season.

Program Chiefs:

Cathy Anderson
Doug Klein
Greg Reisdorff
Mark Wilke

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ne

If you are a producer who happens to be taking a weather-related break from field work, now is a good time to check in with your County FSA Office. We are busy making appointments and preparing files for acreage certification. The acreage reporting deadline for spring-seeded and Conservation Reserve Program acres is July 17. It's important to comply with this deadline in order to maintain eligibility for some farm programs. We have thousands of producers to get through this process over the next couple of months, so scheduling an appointment with us is helpful.

With the spring rains and the warmer temperatures, now is also the time when weeds have the potential to get out of hand on both cropland and noncropland acres. In an article below, you'll note that folks enrolled in programs like Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are responsible for protecting those acres from noxious weeds, as well as wind and water erosion.

On a note related to conservation, I want to call attention to an upcoming educational opportunity for women absentee landowners who want to learn more about soil health and conservation practices. The Center for Rural Affairs, located in Lyons, Nebraska, will be hosting Women Caring for the Land workshops this fall. These will be women-only, peer-to-peer discussions facilitated by female conservation professionals. Anyone who may be interested in this activity or would like to learn more about this opportunity, may contact Kathie Starkweather at (402) 617-7946 or via email at kathies@cfra.org.

That's all I've got for now. Until next month,

--Mike Sander

Sonny Perdue Sworn in as 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

Sonny Perdue was sworn in as the 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by fellow Georgian and Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Clarence Thomas in a brief ceremony on April 25 at the Supreme Court building.

Perdue grew up on a dairy and diversified row crop farm in Bonaire, Georgia. Being uniquely qualified as a former farmer, agribusinessman, veterinarian, state legislator and governor of Georgia, he has experienced the agriculture industry from every possible perspective throughout his life.

As secretary, Perdue says he will champion the concerns of farmers, ranchers, foresters and producers, and will work tirelessly to solve the issues facing our farm families.

Perdue's policies as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture will be guided by four principles which will inform his decisions. First, he will maximize the ability of the men and women of America's agriculture and agribusiness sector to create jobs, to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world, and to reap the earned reward of their labor. Second, he will prioritize customer service every day for American taxpayers and consumers. Third, as Americans expect a safe and secure food supply, USDA will continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established. And fourth, Perdue will always remember that America's agricultural bounty comes directly from the land.

For more information about Secretary Perdue, visit www.usda.gov.

Acreage Reporting Deadline for Spring-Seeded Crops Approaching

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

In Nebraska, the acreage reporting date for 2017 spring-seeded crops, such as corn and soybeans, is July 17, 2017. Acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program also must be certified to FSA by this date.

The following exceptions apply to the above acreage reporting date:

- If the crop has not been planted by the applicable 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 applicable 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 has the intended use of "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," or was planted as a cover crop, then the acreage must be reported by July 17.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP covered crops is the earlier of the applicable dates or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins. For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office.

Policy Updates for Acreage Reporting

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently made several policy updates for acreage reporting for cover crops, revising intended use, late-filed provisions, grazing allotments as well as updated the definitions of "idle" and "fallow."

Reporting Cover Crops:

FSA made changes to the types of cover crops. Cover crop types can be chosen from the following four categories: **Cereals and other grasses** - Any cover crop that is classified as a grass plant or cereal grain, and would include, but not be limited to, the following cover crops: cereal rye, wheat, barley, oats, black oats, triticale, annual ryegrass, pearl millet, foxtail millet (also called German, Italian or Hungarian millet), sorghum sudan grass, sorghum and other millets and grasses.

Legumes - Any cover crop that is classified as a legume, including, but not limited to, clovers, vetches, peas, sun hemp, cowpeas, lentils and other legumes. **Brassicas and other broadleaves** - Any cover crop that is classified as a non-legume broadleaf, including, but not limited to, Brassicas such as radishes, turnips, canola, rapeseed, oilseed rape, and mustards, as well as other broadleaf plants such as phacelia, flax, sunflower, buckwheat, and safflower. **Mixtures** - Mixes of two or more cover crop species planted at the same time, for example, oats and radishes.

If the cover crop is harvested for any use other than forage or grazing and is not terminated according to policy guidelines, then that crop will no longer be considered a cover crop and the acreage report must be revised to reflect the actual crop.

Permitted Revision of Intended use After Acreage Reporting Date:

New operators or owners who pick up a farm after the acreage reporting deadline has passed and the crop has already been reported on the farm, have 30 days to change the intended use. Producer share interest changes alone will not allow for revisions to intended use after the acreage reporting date. The revision must be performed by either the acreage reporting date or within 30 calendar days from the date when the new operator or owner acquired the lease on land, control of the land or ownership and new producer crop share interest in the previously reported crop acreage. Under this policy, appropriate documentation must be provided to the County Committee's satisfaction to determine that a legitimate operator or ownership and producer crop share interest change occurred to permit the revision.

Acreage Reports:

In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, producers must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline.

Reporting Grazing Allotments:

FSA offices can now accept acreage reports for grazing allotments. Producers will use form "FSA-578" to report grazing allotments as animal unit months (AUMs) using the "Reporting Unit" field. The local FSA office will need the grazing period start and end date and the percent of public land.

Definitions of Terms

FSA defines "idle" as cropland or a balance of cropland within a Common Land Unit (CLU) (field/subfield) which is not planted or considered not planted and does not meet the definition of fallow or skip row. For example, the balance of a field that could not be planted due to moisture or a turn area that is not planted would be reported as idle.

Fallow is considered unplanted cropland acres which are part of a crop/fallow rotation where cultivated land that is normally planted is purposely kept out of production during a regular growing season. Resting the ground in this manner allows it to recover its fertility and conserve moisture for crop production in the next growing season.

Producers Are Encouraged to Report Prevented Planting, Failed Acres

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers to report prevented planting and failed acres in order to establish or retain FSA program eligibility for some programs.

Producers should report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were prevented from planting. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Contact your local FSA office for a list of final planting dates by crop.

If a producer is unable to report the prevented planting acreage within the 15 calendar days following the final planting date, a late-filed report can be submitted. Late-filed reports may only be accepted if FSA conducts a farm visit to assess the eligible disaster condition that prevented the crop from being planted. A measurement service fee will be charged.

Additionally, producers with failed acres should also use form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, to report failed acres.

Producers with certain Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance (NAP) 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. Contact your County FSA Office for details regarding these specific crops.

Microloans Developed with Mid-Sized, Small Farms in Mind

FSA is offering farm ownership and operating microloans as an option to better serve the unique financial 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 expenses 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 can be issued to the applicant directly from FSA.

To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are

reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer's credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score.

- Make sure to pay bills on time.
- Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt.
- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts.

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

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

Organic Certification Cost Share Program Available Through FSA

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program (NOP). Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid from Oct. 1, 2016, through Sept. 30, 2017, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope.

Eligible costs include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage.

Ineligible costs include equipment, materials, supplies, transitional certification fees, late fees and inspections necessary to address National Organic Program regulatory violations.

Producers and handlers may submit OCCSP applications to FSA county offices. The FSA OCCSP application form is available at [USDA's eForms site](#), by selecting "Browse forms" and entering "OCCSP" in the "title or keywords" field on the search page.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or contact a local FSA office by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Program Participants Must Maintain Acres Enrolled in ARC/PLC, CRP; Includes Control of Noxious Weeds

Producers enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs must protect all cropland and noncropland acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. Producers who sign ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If a producer fails to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on a farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants also must control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Nebraska is May 1 through July 15. Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

For reference, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has designated 12 weeds in the state as noxious: Canada thistle, leafy spurge, musk thistle, plumeless thistle, purple loosestrife, spotted and diffuse knapweeds, saltcedar, phragmites, sericea lespedeza, Japanese knotweed, Bohemian knotweed and giant knotweed.

County FSA offices will complete field visits and spot-checks of ARC/PLC and CRP acreage and will consult with county weed authorities as necessary. This effort usually begins the later part of May and continues through the summer months.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP) Sign-up

Orchardists and nursery tree growers who experience losses from natural disasters during calendar year 2017 must submit a TAP application either 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent. TAP was authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 as a permanent disaster program. TAP provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Eligible tree types include trees, bushes or vines that produce an annual crop for commercial purposes. Nursery trees include ornamental, fruit, nut and Christmas trees that are produced for commercial sale. Trees used for pulp or timber are ineligible.

To qualify for TAP, orchardists must suffer a qualifying tree, bush or vine loss in excess of 15 percent mortality from an eligible natural disaster. The eligible trees, bushes or vines must have been owned when the natural disaster occurred; however, eligible growers are not required to own the land on which the eligible trees, bushes and vines were planted.

If the TAP application is approved, the eligible trees, bushes and vines must be replaced within 12 months from the date the application is approved. The cumulative total quantity of acres planted to trees, bushes or vines, for which a producer can receive TAP payments, cannot exceed 500 acres annually.

Dates to Remember

May 31, 2017 – Final loan availability for 2016 corn, grain sorghum, soybeans and others
June 1, 2017 – Final date to file an AD-1026 for 2018 crop insurance eligibility
July 3, 2017 – Enrollment period opens for 2018 coverage for Margin Protection Program for Dairy
July 17, 2017 – Acreage reporting deadline for all spring-seeded crops, including Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage, and all other crops for the 2017 crop year
July 17, 2017 – **NAP acreage reporting deadline for millet and spring-seeded mixed forage, oats, peas and sorghum forage
August 1, 2017 – Enrollment period for ARC/PLC ends
August 1, 2017 – Deadline to request farm transfers or reconstitutions for 2017

****Please note the above NAP calendar reference may not be inclusive for all NAP-covered crops; NAP participants should contact their County FSA Office to confirm important program deadlines.**

FSA May Interest Rates

Farm Operating: 3%
Microloan Operating: 3%
Farm Ownership: 4%
Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.50%
Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.50%
Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 year term: 1.5%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 1.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 2.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 2.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 2.375%
Commodity Loan: 2%

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