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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Having trouble viewing this email? [View it as a Web page.](#)

- [A Message from the State Executive Director](#)
- [Still Time to Be Counted in 2017 Census of Agriculture](#)
- [Consult FSA, NRCS Before Breaking New Ground](#)
- [FSA Offers Farm Storage Facility Loans](#)
- [Supervised Credit](#)
- [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, Farm-Raised Fish Program \(ELAP\)](#)
- [Maintaining the Quality of Farm-Stored Loan Grain](#)
- [Unauthorized Disposition of Grain](#)
- [Fruit, Vegetable Planting Rules](#)
- [Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran, Underserved Farmers and Ranchers](#)
- [CRP Routine Grazing, Managed Harvesting](#)
- [Dates to Remember](#)
- [March FSA Interest Rates](#)

Nebraska FSA Newsletter

Nebraska Farm Service Agency

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A Message from the State Executive Director

As the State Executive Director of the Nebraska Farm Service Agency, it is my honor to wish you – our farmers, ranchers and rural landowner customers – Happy National Agriculture Week. National Agriculture Week was built around National Agriculture Day, which generally is designated for the third Tuesday in March and coincides closely with the first day of Spring.

National Agriculture Day, a day designated each year by the [Agriculture Council of America \(ACA\)](#), and National Agriculture Week celebrate American food and fiber production. This year's theme, **Agriculture: Food for Life**, spotlights the hard work of

Mark Jagels
Hilary Maricle
Geoff Ruth

Program Chiefs:

Cathy Anderson
Bob Herchenbach, acting
Doug Klein
Greg Reisdorff
Mark Wilke

To find out more about FSA programming or to find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/ne.

American producers who diligently work to provide food, fiber and more to the United States and countries around the world.

To ensure a prosperous future for American agriculture, FSA provides local service to support millions of agriculturalists across the country. In fiscal year 2017, [USDA Farm Loan programs](#) provided \$6 billion in support to producers across America, the second highest total in FSA history. FSA also distributed \$1.6 billion in [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) payments to over 375,000 Americans to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

For agricultural producers who suffered market downturns in 2016, USDA is issuing approximately \$8 billion in payments under the [Agriculture Risk Coverage \(ARC\) and Price Loss Coverage \(PLC\) programs](#). USDA also continues to provide extensive assistance in response to natural [disasters](#) throughout the country, including service to producers devastated by hurricanes, drought, wildfires, floods, tornados, freezes and other catastrophic weather events.

To support [beginning farmers and ranchers](#), Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue signed a Memorandum of Understanding with officials from [SCORE](#), the nation's largest volunteer network of expert business mentors, to support new and beginning farmers. The agreement provides new help and resources for beginning ranchers, veterans, women, socially disadvantaged Americans and others, providing new tools to help them both grow and thrive in agribusiness.

I, along with the Nebraska FSA staff, am honored to administer programs that enable you, our producers, to manage your risks when the agriculture industry faces hardship. On behalf of the Nebraska FSA employees, I would like to thank you for continuing to feed our state, nation and the world.

--Nancy Johner

Still Time to Be Counted in 2017 Census of Agriculture

Nebraska farmers and ranchers still have time to complete and submit their 2017 Census of Agriculture information.

Dean Groskurth, the director of the Northern Plains Field Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in Lincoln, is encouraging producers who haven't turned their Census data in to do so as soon as possible. NASS staff will continue to follow-up with producers through the Spring with mailings, phone calls and personal visits in order to complete the Census material.

In December farmers and ranchers across the nation received the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Conducted once every five years, the Census is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches and those who operate them; it is the only source of uniform, comprehensive and impartial agriculture data for every state and county in the nation. Farmers and ranchers, trade associations,

government, extension educators, researchers and many others rely on Census of Agriculture data when making decisions that shape American agriculture – from creating and funding farm programs to boosting services for communities and the industry.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call (800) 727-9540.

Consult FSA, NRCS Before Breaking New Ground

'Fix It, Don't Disc It' campaign educates about ephemeral gully erosion

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and the 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 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 (such as clearing new trees to create new cropland) or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria. 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 NRCS for further review is necessary. NRCS is responsible for conducting compliance reviews on HEL in the state.

On a related note, NRCS is conducting an outreach effort called "Fix It, Don't Disc It," to educate farmers and land owners about ephemeral gully erosion, and conservation practices and management options available for repairing the erosion including no-till, seeding cover crops or installing terraces.

To learn more about ephemeral gully erosion and the "Fix It, Don't Disc It" NRCS initiative, producers can visit the NRCS website [Fix It, Don't Disc It](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) or stop in at a local NRCS office. To find a local USDA office go to: <http://offices.usda.gov>.

FSA Offers Farm Storage Facility Loans

FSA's Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program provides low-interest financing to producers to build or upgrade storage facilities and to purchase portable (new or used) structures, equipment and storage and handling trucks.

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

Loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security.

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

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

Supervised Credit

Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loan programs are considered supervised credit. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Therefore, it is FSA's goal to help borrowers graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. Through this process, FSA staff will advise borrowers in developing strategies and a plan to meet their operation's goals and graduate to commercial credit. Ultimately, the borrower is responsible for the success of the farming operation, but FSA's staff will help in an advisory role to provide the tools necessary to help achieve operational goals and manage finances.

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

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)

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, additional cost of transporting water because of an eligible drought and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

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 Oct. 1, 2017, to Sept. 30, 2018, must file: a notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent or by Nov. 1, 2018, and an application for payment by Nov. 1, 2018.

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 and ELAP for Honeybees Fact Sheet.

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

Maintaining the Quality of Farm-Stored Loan Grain

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases.

Producers who take out marketing assistance loans and use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

Unauthorized Disposition of Grain

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

Fruit, Vegetable Planting Rules

Producers who intend to participate in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are subject to an acre-for-acre payment reduction when fruits and nuts or vegetables are planted on the payment acres of a farm. Payment reductions do not apply to mung beans, dry peas, lentils or chickpeas. Planting fruits or vegetables on acres that are not considered payment acres will not result in a payment reduction. Farms that are eligible to participate in ARC/PLC but are not enrolled for a particular year may plant unlimited fruits and vegetables for that year but will not receive ARC/PLC payments for that year. Eligibility for succeeding years is not affected.

Planting and harvesting fruits and vegetables on ARC/PLC acreage is subject to the acre-for-acre payment reduction when those crops are planted on either more than 15 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the county coverage or PLC, or more than 35 percent of the base acres of a farm enrolled in ARC using the individual coverage.

Producers should check with their local FSA office to determine whether a crop they intend to plant will be considered a fruit or vegetable under this rule.

Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran, Underserved Farmers and Ranchers

Retired or retiring landowners or operators are encouraged to transition their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to beginning, veteran or underserved farmers or ranchers through the Transition Incentives Program (TIP). TIP provides annual rental payments to the retiring farmer for

up to two additional years after the CRP contract expires, provided the transition is not to a family member.

Enrollment in TIP is on a continuous basis. Beginning, veteran or underserved farmers and ranchers and retiring CRP participants may enroll in TIP beginning one year before the expiration date of the CRP contract or Aug. 15. For example, if a CRP contract is scheduled to expire on Sept. 30, 2018, the land may be offered for enrollment in TIP beginning Oct. 1, 2017, through Aug. 15, 2018. The Aug. 15 deadline allows the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) time to complete the TIP sustainable grazing or crop production conservation plans. The TIP application must be submitted prior to completing the lease or sale of the affected lands.

New landowners or renters must return the land to production using sustainable grazing or farming methods.

For more information on TIP, visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation>.

CRP Routine Grazing, Managed Harvesting

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants can utilize routine grazing and managed harvesting as outlined in their conservation plan. Managed harvesting and routine grazing are authorized under certain conditions to improve the quality and performance of the CRP cover. However, it is important to remember that not all CRP practices are available for routine grazing and managed harvesting.

Routine grazing is authorized every other year. Contracts approved prior to July 28, 2010, and still considered managed grazing can only participate in grazing one out of every three years.

Managed harvesting for hay is authorized no more frequently than one in three years.

Under normal conditions, managed harvesting and routine grazing can be requested at the local FSA office by the landowner or producer on the CRP contract. The same acreage cannot be harvested and grazed.

CRP acres must be considered fully established before harvesting or grazing can be authorized. In addition, harvesting or grazing CRP acres is not authorized during the primary nesting season. For Nebraska, the primary nesting season is May 1 through July 15. Producers must request approval before harvesting or grazing the acreage.

For routine grazing, Nebraska has two available CRP grazing periods: April 1 to April 30 or July 16-Sept. 15. Before grazing eligible acreage, CRP participants must request approval and obtain a modified conservation plan to include routine grazing requirements. Participants must report the number of acres routine grazed to FSA by Sept. 30, 2018.

For harvesting, the authorization expires Aug. 31, 2018, and all hay bales must be **completely removed** from CRP contract acres by no later than Oct. 15, 2018. CRP participants must report the number of acres harvested to FSA by no later than Sept. 30, 2018. Harvesting is limited to one cutting.

Routine grazing and managed harvesting will result in an annual rental payment reduction of no less than 25 percent based on the number of acres actually grazed or harvested. Producers who qualify as a beginning farmer or rancher, who are grazing CRP acres, will not be assessed a payment reduction. This waiver only applies to routine grazing.

All harvested and grazed acres are subject to FSA spot-check at any time during or after the authorization period.

It is important to contact your local FSA office prior to any harvesting or grazing activities on CRP acres to ensure your contract remains in compliance.

Dates to Remember

April 2, 2018 – Deadline to file supporting documents for 2017 Livestock Indemnity Program applications

April 2, 2018 – 2017 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for barley, canola, crambe, flaxseed, honey, oats, rapeseed, wheat and sesame seed

May 31, 2018 – 2017 Marketing Assistance Loan availability deadline for corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, safflower seed, chickpeas, soybeans and sunflower seed

July 16, 2018 – Deadline to report all spring-seeded crops and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage

March FSA Interest Rates

Farm Operating: 3.250%

Microloan Operating: 3.250%

Farm Ownership: 3.750%

Farm Ownership - Joint Financing: 2.50%

Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.50%

Emergency - Actual Loss: 3.75%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 3 year term: 2.250%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 2.500%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 2.750%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 2.750%

Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 2.750%

Commodity Loan: 2.875%

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