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Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Nebraska State FSA Newsletter

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A Message from the State Executive Director

As we hit the half way mark of the calendar year, and my first-six-months mark as your State Executive Director, two things stand out. The first is that Nebraska FSA has talented and dedicated employees in our offices across the state. The second is that they are a very busy bunch. The work we do to implement farm programs on your behalf never seems to let up, and consequently neither do we.

Several items have been added to our FSA plate since the last time I wrote, and I want to call your attention to them.

Geoff Ruth
Mark Jagels

Program Chiefs:

Cathy Anderson
Doug Klein
Greg Reisdorff
Mark Wilke
Tim Divis

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

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): I know folks will be interested, because we've been getting the question "when will there be a CRP sign-up?" for months. Earlier this month FSA announced CRP sign-up 51. The application opportunity is for certain CRP water-quality practices and CRP Grasslands, as well as an extension opportunity for some current contracts. The enrollment period is open through Aug. 17. See the article below for more information and then stop in to see us.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP): The Bipartisan Budget Act passed by Congress in February contained several changes to these important disaster assistance programs. If you have used these programs in the past or are concerned you might need them in the future, read below to find out about the program changes.

County Committee elections: It's the start of the FSA County Committee election season, with nominations for local county committee representatives now being accepted through Aug. 1. County Committees play an important role in your local agriculture community because they are made up of farmers and ranchers, elected by farmers and ranchers. County Committees provide a local voice on FSA programming and county office operations. Want to learn more? Read below and then stop in and visit with your county executive director.

That's it for this month. Enjoy the extended daylight hours.

--Nancy Johner

USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

One-Year Extension Available to Holders of Many Expiring Contracts through Continuous Signup

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers, and private landowners can sign up at their local [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) office between June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short signup period helps ensure landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 Signup for CRP

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. [View a full list of practices.](#)

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP Grasslands

Additionally, FSA established new [ranking criteria](#) for [CRP Grasslands](#). To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Soil Rental Rates for the Conservation Reserve Program Updated for 2018

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has released updated 2018 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) soil rental rates. These rental rates are soil-specific estimates of dryland rental rates that FSA uses to set maximum payment rates for CRP offers and contracts. Soil rental rates were last updated in 2017. Virtually all soil rental rates have changes for 2018. For soil-specific rental rate information, please contact your [local USDA service center](#). For more information on the Conservation Reserve Program, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov/CRP.

Acreage Reporting Deadline Nears; Make a Certification Appointment Now

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

Producers who file accurate and timely acreage certification reports, including failed and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the potential loss of FSA program benefits. The acreage reporting deadline for all spring-seeded crops and Conservation Reserve Program acres is July 16, 2018. Nebraska FSA county offices are scheduling acreage certification appointments now in order to complete this process by the deadline for all producers.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- 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 is reported with the intended use of "cover only," "green manure," "left standing," or "seed," then the acreage must be reported by July 16th.

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.

Eligibility for Nominations for the 2018 County Committee Elections

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs.

Committees are comprised of locally elected agricultural producers responsible for the fair and equitable administration of FSA farm programs in their counties. Committee members are accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture. If elected, members become part of a local decision making and farm program delivery process.

A county committee is composed of three to 11 elected members from local administrative areas (LAA). Each member serves a three-year term. To be eligible for nomination and hold office as a committee member or alternate, a person must fulfill each of the following requirements: (1) be a producer with an interest in farming or ranching operations, (2) participate or cooperate in any FSA program provided for by law, (3) be a U.S. citizen, (4) be of legal voting age, (5) meet the basic eligibility requirements, and (6) reside in the county or multi-county jurisdiction in which they will be serving.

All nomination forms for the 2018 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA service center by Aug. 1, 2018. For more information on FSA county committee elections and appointments, refer to the FSA fact sheet: Eligibility to Vote and Hold Office as a COC Member available online at: www.fsa.usda.gov/elections.

Producers 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 will 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 of hand-harvested and certain other 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.

For losses on crops covered by the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producers must file a Notice of Loss within 15 days of the occurrence of the disaster or when losses become apparent. Producers must timely file a Notice of Loss for failed acres on all crops including grasses.

Direct Loans Offered Through FSA for Operating, Ownership

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.

FSA Guaranteed Loan Program Works with Lenders for Producers

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.

Please contact your lender or local FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

USDA Reopens Application Period for Producers Recovering from Cattle Loss, Other Disasters

Signup Started June 4 for Livestock Indemnity Program and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish

USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) has reopened the application period for two disaster assistance programs in response to statutory changes made by Congress earlier this year.

Beginning June 4, FSA will accept new applications for losses for calendar year 2017 or 2018 filed under the [Livestock Indemnity Program](#) (LIP) or [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program](#) (ELAP). Producers who already submitted applications and received decisions on their applications for these years do not need to file again, but they can reapply if they have additional losses or their application was disapproved because it was filed late.

In February, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which made several changes to these two disaster programs, including:

- Removing ELAP's \$20 million fiscal year funding cap, enabling FSA to pay producers' 2017 applications in full and their 2018 applications as soon as they are approved.
- Removing the per-person and legal entity annual program payment limitation of \$125,000 for LIP for 2017 and future years. (The income limitation applies as it did before, meaning producers with an adjusted gross income of more than \$900,000 are not eligible.)

- Changing LIP to allow producers to receive a payment for injured livestock that are sold for a reduced price due to an eligible event. Previously, the program only covered financial loss for livestock death above normal mortality.

Producers interested in LIP or ELAP should contact their [local USDA service center](#). To apply, producers will need to provide verifiable and reliable production records and other information about their operation.

Drought, wildfires and other disasters continue to impact farmers and ranchers, and LIP and ELAP are two of many programs available through USDA to help producers recover. Learn more at <https://www.usda.gov/disaster>.

FSA Releases Signup Information for Tree Assistance Program

USDA's Farm Service Agency recently released signup information for the [Tree Assistance Program](#), a nationwide program that provides orchardists and nursery tree growers with cost share assistance to replant eligible trees, bushes and vines following a natural disaster.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 prescribed several changes to the program, including the removal of the \$125,000 per person and legal entity payment limitation. The [notice](#) outlined when producers should file applications for any recent losses, given the changes to the program.

Eligible producers should file for TAP assistance by the later of these two dates:

- 90 days from the disaster or when damages from the disaster are noticed; or
- 60 days after the regulation is published in the Federal Register later this summer.

The following producers can file applications:

- Producers who did not previously apply for TAP for 2017 or 2018 losses; and
- Producers who had applied and received an adverse determination that their 2017 or 2018 TAP application was filed late.

Additionally, producers with 2017 losses can also file an application or revise an original application because of the changes made through the Act.

For more information on TAP, producers should contact their [local USDA service center](#).

Foreign Buyers Notification

The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA) requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings to the Secretary of Agriculture. Foreign persons who have purchased or sold agricultural land in any county are required to report the transaction to FSA within 90 days of the closing. Failure to submit the AFIDA form could result in civil penalties of up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the property. County government offices, realtors, attorneys and others involved in real estate transactions are reminded to notify foreign investors of these reporting requirements.

June FSA Interest Rates

Farm Operating: 3.625%
Microloan Operating: 3.625%
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: 2.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 5 year term: 2.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 7 year term: 3%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 10 year term: 3%
Farm Storage Facility Loan 12 year term: 3%
Commodity Loan: 3.250%

Dates to Remember

July 4, 2018 – USDA Farm Service Agency Offices closed in observance of Independence Day
July 16, 2018 – Deadline to report all spring-seeded crops and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage
July 16, 2018 – **NAP acreage reporting deadline for millet and spring-seeded mixed forage, oats, peas and sorghum forage
Aug. 1, 2018 – Enrollment period for ARC/PLC ends
Aug. 1, 2018 – Deadline to request farm transfers or reconstitutions for 2018
Aug. 1, 2018 – FSA County Committee candidate nomination forms must be turned in to local service center office or postmarked by this date
Aug. 17, 2018 – Application deadline for Conservation Reserve Program sign-up 51

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

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).