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Illinois FSA Newsletter

Illinois Farm Service Agency

3500 Wabash Ave.
Springfield, IL 62711

Phone:217-241-6600 ext. 2
Fax:855-800-1760

www.fsa.usda.gov/il

State Executive Director:
Scherrie V. Giamanco

State Committee:
Jill Appell-Chairperson
Brenda Hill-Member
Jerry Jimenez-Member
Joyce Matthews-Member
Gordon Stine-Member

Direct Loans

FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans.

Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm,

Executive Officer:
Rick Graden

Administrative Officer:
Dan Puccetti

Division Chiefs:
Doug Bailey
Jeff Koch
Stan Wilson

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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 County FSA office for more information or to apply for a direct farm ownership or operating loan.

USDA Climate Hub Building Block: Conservation of Sensitive Lands

USDA Climate Hubs are working with producers, ranchers, pasture and forest landowners to effectively partner in ways to help reduce climate change. To aid in this partnership, USDA established the 10 Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry.

One such Building Block is the “Conservation of Sensitive Lands”. The term “sensitive lands” denotes soils and landscapes that are valuable due to properties (e.g., high organic matter, wet hydrology) and/or function (e.g., wildlife habitat, filtration, and hydrologic storage). Typical examples of these soils are organic rich histosols, floodplains, or wetlands along riparian areas. Properties and functions of these soils are easily disrupted from agricultural or urban land use.

Sensitive lands that are used for agricultural production can be protected by changes in land use (long-term cover). This reduction in land use intensity can provide multiple environmental benefits, including substantial GHG mitigation that occurs as carbon is sequestered or preserved in soils and vegetation. When land is removed from crop production, several activities—including tillage, nitrogen fertilization, and energy use—are substantially reduced or eliminated, generating additional GHG mitigation.

FSA and NRCS are committed to identifying these sensitive lands and encouraging landowners, farmers, and ranchers to voluntarily adopt conservation systems--using financial and technical assistance--to generate GHG benefits. To read more about Conservation of Sensitive Lands, click the following link: http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/building_blocks/4_SensitiveLands.pdf

For more information about the USDA Climate Hubs click here: http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/

Maintaining the Quality of Loaned 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.

Guaranteed Loan Program

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 County FSA farm loan office for more information on guaranteed loans.

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 and a violation of the terms and conditions of the Note and Security Agreement. 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. If you have questions concerning the movement of grain under loan, please contact your local county FSA office.

USDA Extends Margin Protection Program for Dairy Enrollment Deadline

USDA announced that it will extend the deadline for dairy producers to enroll in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) for Dairy to Dec. 16, 2016, from the previous deadline of Sept. 30. This voluntary dairy safety net program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin – the difference between the price of milk and feed costs – falls below the coverage level selected by the producer. A USDA web tool, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy producers to calculate levels of coverage available from MPP based on price projections.

Farm Safety

Flowing grain in a storage bin or gravity-flow wagon is like quicksand — it can kill quickly. It takes less than five seconds for a person caught in flowing grain to be trapped.

The mechanical operation of grain handling equipment also presents a real danger. Augers, power take offs, and other moving parts can grab people or clothing.

These hazards, along with pinch points and missing shields, are dangerous enough for adults; not to mention children. It is always advisable to keep children a safe distance from operating farm equipment. Always use extra caution when backing or maneuvering farm machinery. Ensure everyone is visibly clear and accounted for before machinery is engaged.

FSA wants all farmers to have a productive crop year and that begins with putting safety first.

USDA Offers New Loans for Portable Farm Storage and Handling Equipment

Portable Equipment Can Help Producers, including Small-Scale and Local Farmers, Get Products to Market Quickly

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment through the Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program. The loans, which now include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments, are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets. The FSFL program allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities.

The program also offers a new "microloan" option, which allows applicants seeking less than $50,000 to qualify for a reduced down payment of five percent and no requirement to provide three years of production history with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 95 percent of the net cost of the eligible FSFL equipment. Farms and ranches of all sizes are eligible. The microloan option is expected to be of particular benefit to smaller 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 like conveyers, scales or refrigeration units and trucks that can store commodities before delivering them to markets. FSFL microloans can also be used to finance wash and pack equipment used post-harvest, before a commodity is placed in cold storage. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply for FSFL's.

Larger farming and ranching operations, that may not be able to participate in the new "microloan" option, may apply for the traditional, larger FSFL's with the maximum principal amount for each loan through FSFL of $500,000.00. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Additional security is required for poured-cement open-bunker silos, renewable biomass facilities, cold storage facilities, hay barns and for all loans exceeding $100,000.00. FSFL loan terms of 3, 5, 7, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department.

Earlier this year, FSA significantly expanded the list of commodities eligible for FSFL. Eligible commodities now include aquaculture; floriculture; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables; corn, grain sorghum, rice, oilseeds, oats, wheat, triticale, spelt, buckwheat, lentils, chickpeas, dry peas sugar,barley, rye, hay, honey, hops, maple sap, unprocessed meat and poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and renewable biomass.

Applications for FSFL must be submitted to the FSA county office that maintains the farm's records.

A FSFL must be approved before any site preparation or construction can begin.

To learn more about Farm Storage Facility Loans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/pricesupport or contact a local FSA county office. To find your local FSA county office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

Guaranteed Conservation Loans

Guaranteed Conservation Loans are available for applicants to install a conservation practice. These funds may be used for any conservation activities included in a conservation plan or Forest Stewardship Management plan. A copy of the conservation plan is required to complete the application. These loans are not limited to just family farmers. In some cases, applicants can operate non-eligible enterprises. Loan funds are issued by a participating commercial lender and guaranteed up to 80 percent by FSA or up to 90 percent for beginning and historically underserved producers.

Marketing Assistance Available for 2016 Wheat, Other Crops

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

MALs and LDPs provide financing and marketing assistance for 2016 crop wheat, and other commodities such as 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 without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows.

Illinois FSA county offices are now accepting requests for 2016 crop wheat, oats, barley and honey MALs and LDPs for eligible commodities after harvest. As 2016 crop harvest begins, Illinois FSA county offices are accepting requests for 2016 fall harvested crops; corn and soybeans.

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

In Illinois Hard Red Winter (HRW) prices are below the HRW wheat marketing assistance loan amount and LDPs may are applicable for HRW. Producers should become familiar with the process to access and request LDP assistance.

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

September Interest Rates and Important Dates to Remember

Selected Interest Rates for September 2016	
90-Day Treasury Bill	.250%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.125%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.125%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.500%
Emergency Loans	3.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (3 years)	0.875%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (5 years)	1.125%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	1.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (10 years)	1.500%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (12 years)	1.625%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (15 years)	1.750%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.500%

Dates to Remember	
Sept. 30	Last day for COF to enter events into OTIS for FY 2016
Dec. 16	Final date to ENROLL in 2017 MPP
Continuous	FSFL Applications
Continuous	Farm Records Changes
Continuous	Continuous CRP Signup (waterways, filter strips, field borders, pollinator habitat)