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Kansas FSA January Newsletter

Kansas Farm Service Agency

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Farm Service Agency Offers Text Alerts

*Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders
and Updates*

Whether producers are in the field, on a tractor or even on horseback, this service enables FSA customers and stakeholders to receive notifications while on the go. Subscribers will receive text messages regarding important program deadlines, reporting requirements, outreach events and updates.

Self-subscribe to the text message alerts service by texting kscounty name (example: ksriley) to FSANOW (372669). Expect to receive no more than two text messages from each FSA office per month, on average. Subscribing to your county office automatically subscribes you to state and national alerts as well. Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your

State Executive Director: Adrian J. Polansky

To find your local FSA county office, click <http://offices.usda.gov>

Need more info about a specific program? Read FSA program fact sheets [here](#), or watch video webinars [here](#).

[FSAfarm+](#) is available! To enroll in this online service, producers should contact their local FSA office to obtain Level 2 eAuthentication.

Selected Interest Rates for December 2016

Farm Operating Loans, Direct -- 2.375%
Farm Ownership Loans, Direct -- 3.625%
Farm Ownership Loans, Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher -- 1.50%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years) -- 2.25%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present -- 1.875%

wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Loan Servicing Options Available

Farm Service Agency can assist loan customers under financial stress. If you are an FSA borrower who is struggling to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

Register Now for the 2017 Women Managing the Farm Conference

“Her AgriCULTURE Story: Change, Adapt, Grow” is the theme of the 2017 Women Managing the Farm Conference planned for February 9-10 in Manhattan, Kansas. Pre-conference workshops are offered February 8.

The event will bring together women from many sectors and proficiencies in agriculture and provide them with insights for building their agricultural story and managing their farm investment. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, women are the principal operators of 6,783 farms in Kansas, and there are 25,611 total women farm operators in the state. With consideration for the many important roles women have in agriculture, leaders from various Kansas ag organizations, including FSA, established the Women Managing the Farm Conference as a place for women to network and increase the knowledge and skills needed for success in a competitive agricultural environment.

During the two-day conference, attendees choose from over 30 presentations covering many agricultural topics, including: farm finances, agricultural and estate law, production, marketing, management, relationships and health. Register prior to January 20 for the reduced rate of \$150 at <http://womenmanagingthefarm.blogspot.com/p/home.html> or call 800-432-8222. Limited scholarships are available.

USDA Expands Microloans to Help Farmers Purchase Farmland and Improve Property

Producers, Including Beginning and Underserved Farmers, Have a New Option to Gain Access to Land

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans are especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program, now in its fourth year, has been hugely successful, providing more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers.

Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This microloan announcement is another USDA resource for America's farmers and ranchers to utilize, especially as [new and beginning farmers and ranchers](#) look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans, or contact your local FSA office.

Loan Assistance for Beginning Farmers

FSA can assist beginning farmers with financing agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. 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 training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's average size farm

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

New CRP SAFE Practice Available Soon in Western Kansas

Program Will Protect and Restore Playa Lakes, Increase Habitat for Migratory Birds

A newly-established Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) SAFE practice—the Migratory Bird, Butterfly, and Pollinator Habitat practice—will allow up to 10,000 new acres in Kansas to be offered into CRP. Eligibility is strictly limited to landowners and ag producers who want to enhance existing playas or restore historic playas located in distinct priority areas established in the western one-third of Kansas.

There are approximately 7500 playas eligible in these priority areas. Research has shown that properly functioning playas are a primary source of recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer — contributing up to 95 percent of inflow to the aquifer and improving the quality of that water — and also provide critical habitat for migrating waterfowl, cranes and shorebirds.

This SAFE practice, CP38B, is designed to provide private landowners a market-based financial incentive for restoring playas, the most common wetlands in the region. An innovative market-based approach for sign-up will enable landowners to submit bids of up to \$300 per acre. Submitted bids are based upon landowner values in a competitive process. While the program has been approved, an enrollment period has not yet been announced. Details on signup dates and requirements will be provided in the near future.

The program allows for a minimum playa size of 2 acres and up to a maximum tract size of 160 acres. Mid-contract management practices to keep the cover healthy will be required. This includes the option for managed harvesting of the acres and/or prescribed grazing. Contracts will be for 10-15 years. SAFE is a continuous CRP signup conservation practice, but offers will be ranked at intervals. Offers that don't make the first cut-off date, or aren't accepted during the first batch, will be carried over for consideration during the next round.

The Migratory Bird SAFE is a grassroots, cooperative conservation effort that was jointly proposed by [Playa Lakes Joint Venture](#) and the [Rainwater Basin Joint Venture](#), based in Nebraska. It involves several partners including FSA and [NRCS](#), [Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism](#), [Ducks Unlimited](#), and [Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams](#). These agencies, along with Kansas Farm Service Agency, are all available to work with producers interested in enrolling in the Migratory Bird, Butterfly, and Pollinator Habitat SAFE.

USDA Climate Hub ‘Energy Generation and Efficiency’ Building Block

Through the Agricultural Act of 2014, USDA has several authorities that encourage the adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. The Energy Generation and Efficiency Building Block supports energy efficiency improvements in rural homes and on farm operations, for example, through EQIP's National On-Farm Energy Initiative. This Building Block also provides opportunities to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from energy generation and use, for example, through the Rural Energy for America Program. To learn more about energy generation and efficiency opportunities from USDA click the following link:

http://www.usda.gov/oce/climate_change/building_blocks/10_EnergyGenerationEfficiency.pdf

For more information about the USDA Climate Hubs click here:

<http://www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/>.

Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements

Expanded Eligibility for Transition and State Certification Cost

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to visit over 2,100 USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification.

USDA reimburses organic producers up to 75 percent of the cost of organic certification, but only about half of the nation's organic operations currently participate in the program. Starting March 20, USDA will provide a uniform, streamlined process for organic producers and handlers to apply for organic cost share assistance either by mail or in person.

USDA is making changes to increase participation in the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and at the same time provide more opportunities for organic producers to access other USDA programs, such as disaster protection and loans for farms, facilities and marketing. Producers can also access information on nonfederal agricultural resources, and get referrals to local experts, including organic agriculture, through USDA's Bridges to Opportunity service at the local FSA office.

Historically, many state departments of agriculture, including Kansas, have obtained grants to disburse reimbursements to those producers and handlers qualifying for cost share assistance. FSA will continue to partner with these states to administer the programs. For states that want to continue to directly administer the programs, applications will be due February 17, 2017.

Eligible producers include any certified producers or handlers who have paid organic or transitional certification fees to a [USDA-accredited certifying](#) agent. Application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement/ arrangement requirements, travel/per diem for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments and postage are all eligible for a cost share reimbursement from USDA.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75 percent of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope—crops, livestock, wild crops and handling. Today's announcement also adds transitional certification and state organic program fees as additional scopes.

To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or your local county office.

New Program to "Bridge" Farmers to Additional Resources

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced the expansion of a unique service for farmers and ranchers. FSA's Bridges to Opportunity program provides a one-stop-shop that connects producers with resources, programs and educational services offered across the department, as well as from other USDA partner organizations. Bridges to Opportunity, which currently provides enhanced customer support to more than 150,000 customers in 20 states, will expand to serve customers in Kansas and across the country, before the end of the month, using fiscal year 2016 funds.

FSA's presence in over 2,100 county offices, in nearly every rural county, puts the agency in a unique position to partner with non-governmental organizations to reach thousands of agricultural producers who can benefit from the programs and services. Bridges to Opportunity allows FSA employees to search and obtain a list of all local, state, regional and national organizations that may be able assist local producers with their specific need. For example, FSA's Houston County office in Texas partnered with many agricultural organizations to serve producers affected by severe drought. When drought-stricken agricultural producers came to the county office looking for assistance, FSA employees were able to provide traditional services, such as the Livestock Forage Program and the Emergency loan program administered by FSA, as well as connect local farmers with local, regional, and national organizations that provide drought assistance and education.

Bridges to Opportunity was developed by FSA to provide producers with a more comprehensive customer service experience by connecting them with other USDA agencies and nonfederal partners. Through Bridges to Opportunity, FSA county office employees have the tools to connect farmers, ranchers and anyone interested in agriculture with customized expertise on topics ranging including organic production, beginning farmer resources, integrated pest management, disaster assistance, conservation practices, agricultural educational courses, loans, grants and other financial assistance that can start, grow or benefit farming and ranching operations.

To learn more about Bridges to Opportunity and how it can help you, contact your FSA County Office or visit the [Bridges to Opportunity website](#) for more information.

Report Livestock Losses Timely for Compensation

Livestock disaster programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill as permanent programs through the 2018 program year. The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold. Animals lost due to attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law are also covered.

Producers who suffer livestock death losses are encouraged to record all pertinent information of natural disaster consequences, including documentation of the number and kind of livestock that have died, supplemented if possible by photographs or video records of ownership and losses, and dates of death supported by birth recordings or purchase receipts.

Producers must submit a notice of loss within 30 days of when the loss is apparent. Participants must also file a final application for payment and provide supporting documentation for 2016 losses by March 31, 2017. Supporting documentation can include proof of death documentation, copy of growers contracts, and proof of normal mortality documentation.

Kansas FSA State Committee has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.1% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 2.7%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at FSA's [LIP website](#).

USDA Makes it Easier to Transfer Land to the Next Generation of Farmers and Ranchers

Allows for Transfer of Certain Conservation Reserve Program Land to New Farmers; Provides Priority Enrollment in Working Lands Conservation Programs

Beginning Jan. 9, 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will offer an early termination opportunity for certain Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, making it easier to transfer property to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, including family members. The land that is eligible for the early termination is among the least environmentally sensitive land enrolled in CRP.

This change to the CRP program is just one of many that USDA has implemented based on recommendations from the Land Tenure Advisory Subcommittee formed by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in 2015.

Normally if a landowner terminates a CRP contract early, they are required to repay all previous payments plus interest. The new policy waives this repayment if the land is transferred to a beginning farmer or rancher through a sale or lease with an option to buy. With CRP enrollment close to the Congressionally-mandated cap of 24 million acres, the early termination will also allow USDA to enroll other land with higher conservation value elsewhere.

Acres terminated early from CRP under these land tenure provisions will be eligible for priority enrollment consideration into the CRP Grasslands, if eligible; or the Conservation Stewardship Program or Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

According to the Tenure, Ownership and Transition of Agricultural Land survey, conducted by USDA in 2014, U.S. farmland owners expect to transfer 93 million acres to new ownership during 2015-2019. This represents 10 percent of all farmland across the nation. Details on the early termination opportunity will be available starting on Jan. 9, 2017, at local USDA service centers. For more information about CRP and to find out if your acreage is eligible for early contract termination, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or go online at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

2016 County Committee Elections In the Books

The annual county committee election process is over, ballots have been counted, and newly-elected committee members take office in January, based on approval by the Kansas State FSA Committee. Thank you to all Kansas producers for participating in this election process, whether you were a nominee or took the time to vote and return your ballot. County FSA committees are a valuable asset because they are comprised of local producers who participate in FSA programs themselves and have a direct connection to farmers and ranchers in the community.

Elected county committee members serve a three-year term and are responsible for making decisions on FSA disaster, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as other important federal farm program issues.

For more information about your local county committee and the election process, please contact your local FSA Office or visit [County Committee Elections](#).

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).
