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Farm Service Agency Electronic News Service

NEWSLETTER

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Michigan FSA Newsletter

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To find contact information for your local office go to offices.usda.gov.

Note from the State Executive Director

Over \$57 million will be paid to Michigan farms that enrolled in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) for 2017 market downturns. Additionally, Michigan FSA will distribute over \$14.7 million in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) rental payments to landowners for their commitment to conservation stewardship.

These payments help provide reassurance to Michigan farm families who continue to persevere, even in this tough farm economy.

PLC payments have triggered for 2017 barley, canola, corn, grain sorghum, wheat and other crops. Producers with bases enrolled in ARC for 2017 crops can visit www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc for updated crop yields, prices, revenue and payment rates. In Michigan, 80 counties have experienced a drop in price and/or revenues below the benchmark price established by the ARC or PLC programs and will receive payments.

It's important to remember that ARC and PLC payments by county can vary because average county yields will differ.

Also, this week, USDA will begin issuing 2018 CRP payments to support voluntary conservation efforts on private lands. In Michigan, payments on over 9,400 contracts will compensate landowners for their efforts to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve wildlife habitat.

Since its inception in the 1980s, CRP has built upon the voluntary participation of farmers and landowners to take sensitive land out of production and establish land cover to improve the environment.

For more information about USDA programs or to locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit www.farmers.gov.

Just Around the Corner

November 1: ELAP application deadline for eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish losses suffered from Oct. 1, 2017 through Sept. 30, 2018

November 5: County Office Committee election ballots mailed to eligible voters.

November 12: Offices closed for Veterans Day Observance

November 15: Acreage reporting deadline for fall seeded grains and forages

November 20: NAP application closing date for asparagus, rhubarb, most perennial fruits and nuts

November 22: Offices closed for Thanksgiving Day

December 1: NAP Application closing date for honey and maple sap

December 4: Deadline to return County Office Committee election ballots to the USDA Service Center

December 25: Offices closed for Christmas Holiday

The dates here are provided for general reference. Some areas and crops may have dates that differ from the general guidelines above. It is the producer's responsibility to personally verify deadlines applicable to each farm's crops with their local Farm Service Agency county office.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee, and 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: 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 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.

USDA Market Facilitation Program

USDA launched the trade mitigation package aimed at assisting farmers suffering from damage due to unjustified trade retaliation by foreign nations. Producers of certain commodities can now sign up for the [Market Facilitation Program \(MFP\)](#).

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will administer MFP to provide payments to corn (fresh and processed), dairy, hog, sorghum, soybean (fresh and processed), wheat, and fresh sweet cherry producers. An announcement about further payments will be made in the coming months, if warranted.

The sign-up period for MFP runs through Jan. 15, 2019, with information and instructions provided at www.farmers.gov/mfp. MFP provides payments to producers of eligible commodities who have been significantly impacted by actions of foreign governments resulting in the loss of traditional exports. Eligible producers should apply after harvest is complete, as payments will only be issued once production is reported.

A payment will be issued on 50 percent of the producer's total production, multiplied by the MFP rate for a specific commodity. A second payment period, if warranted, will be determined by the USDA. For a list of initial MFP payments rates, view the [MFP Fact Sheet](#).

MFP payments are capped per person or legal entity as follows:

- A combined \$125,000 for eligible crop commodities
- A combined \$125,000 for dairy production and hogs
- A combined \$125,000 for fresh sweet cherries and shelled almonds.

Applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income for tax years 2014, 2015, and 2016 of less than \$900,000. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

Expanded Hog Timeline

USDA has expanded the timeline for producers with whom the Aug. 1, 2018, date does not accurately represent the number of head of live hogs they own. Producers may now choose any date between July 15 to Aug. 15, 2018 that correctly reflects their actual operation.

MFP applications are available online at www.farmers.gov/mfp. Applications can be completed at a local FSA office or submitted electronically either by scanning, emailing, or faxing. To locate or contact your local FSA office, visit www.farmers.gov.

Transitioning Expiring CRP Land to Beginning, Veteran or 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>.

Breaking New Ground

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and 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 or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

USDA Offers Targeted Farm Loan Funding for Underserved Groups and Beginning Farmers

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that FSA offers targeted farm ownership and farm operating loans to assist underserved applicants as well as beginning farmers and ranchers.

USDA defines underserved applicants as a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. For farm loan program purposes, targeted underserved groups are women, African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Underserved or beginning farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank can apply for either FSA direct loans or guaranteed loans. Direct loans are made to applicants by FSA. Guaranteed loans are made by lending institutions who arrange for FSA to guarantee the loan. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. The FSA guarantee allows lenders to make agricultural credit available to producers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria.

The direct and guaranteed loan program provides for two types of loans: farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. In addition to customary farm operating and ownership loans, FSA now offers Microloans through the direct loan program. The focus of Microloans is on the financing needs of small, beginning farmer, niche and non-traditional farm operations. Microloans are available for both ownership and operating finance needs. To learn more about microloans, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans.

To qualify as a beginning producer, the individual or entity must meet the eligibility requirements outlined for direct or guaranteed loans. Additionally, individuals and all entity members must have operated a farm for less than 10 years. Applicants must materially or substantially participate in the operation.

For more information on FSA's farm loan programs and targeted underserved and beginning farmer guidelines, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans.

Interest Rates - October 2018

FSA Farm Loans

- Farm Operating - Direct: 3.750%
- Farm Ownership - Direct: 4.125%
- Farm Ownership - Direct, Joint Financing: 2.500%
- Farm Ownership - Down Payment: 1.500%
- Emergency Loan - Amount of Actual Loss: 3.750%

Commodity Credit Corporation

- Crop year commodity loans less than 1 year: 3.500% per annum
- CCC borrowing rate-based interest charges: 2.500% per annum
- 3 year FSFL: 2.750% per annum
- 5 year FSFL: 2.750% per annum
- 7 year FSFL: 2.875% per annum
- 10 year FSFL: 2.875% per annum
- 12 year FSFL: 3.000% per annum

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).