February 2017

United States Department of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency

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Oregon State FSA Newsletter

Oregon Farm Service Agency

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Acting State Executive Director:
Dan LoFaro

Organic Producers and Handlers May Apply for Certification Cost Share Reimbursements; Expanded Eligibility for Transition and State Certification Cost

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

Program Chiefs:
Bob Perry, Farm Loan Chief
Wes Jennings, Farm Program Chief
Dan LoFaro, Chief Administrative Officer

State Committee:
Sam Asai, Chairperson
Jason Smith, Member
Vernon Frederickson, Member
Anna Sullivan, Member

Next State Committee Meeting (tentative):
May 17-18, 2017

To find contact information for your local office go to www.fsa.usda.gov/or

Selected Interest Rates for February

90 Day Treasury Bill = 0.500 %

Farm Operating Loans - Direct = 2.875%

Farm Ownership Loans - Direct = 4.000 %

Farm Ownership Loans - Direct Downpayment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher = 1.500 %

Emergency Loans = 3.875%

Farm Storage Facility Loans
(7 years) = 2.250%
(10 years) = 2.500 %
(12 years) = 2.500 %

Commodity Loans = 1.875 %

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 have obtained grants to disburse reimbursements to those producers and handlers qualifying for cost share assistance. FSA will continue to partner with states to administer the programs. For states that want to continue to directly administer the programs, applications will be due Feb. 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. This 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 contact a local FSA office by visiting http://offices.usda.gov.

Important Dates and Deadlines

March 15: Last day for foresters and farmers to apply for incentives to remove biomass residue under BCAP

March 15 - Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for: Beans, broccoli, camelina, cantaloupe, carrots (not for seed), cauliflower, corn, cucumber, lentils, mustard, oats, peas, potatoes, pumpkin, safflower, sunflower, squash, tomato, watermelon

March 20 - Organic producers and handlers can apply at local FSA offices for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of maintaining or receiving organic or transitional certification.

May 15 - Deadline to purchase NAP coverage for: Buckwheat

August 1, 2017 - Enrollment ends for the 2017 ARC PLC Program.

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

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is offering 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.

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.

Report Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for 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.

For 2016, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2016, and no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable adverse weather event or attack. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 2% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2016 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent
- An application for payment by March 31, 2017.

Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Expands Grasslands Conservation Program to Small-Scale Livestock Producers

Helping Dairy, Beef and Other Producers Protect Working Grasslands in 43 States

USDA will accept over 300,000 acres in 43 states that were offered by producers during the recent ranking period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands enrollment with emphasis placed on small-scale livestock operations. Through the voluntary CRP Grasslands program, grasslands threatened by development or conversion to row crops are maintained as livestock grazing areas, while providing important conservation benefits. Approximately 200,000 of the accepted acres were offered by small-scale livestock operations.

The most recent ranking period closed on Dec. 16, 2016, and included for the first time a CRP Grasslands practice specifically tailored for small-scale livestock grazing operations to encourage broader participation. Under this ranking period and for future periods, small-scale livestock operations with 100 or fewer head of grazing cows (or the equivalent) can submit applications to enroll up to 200 acres of grasslands per farm. Larger operations may still make offers through the normal process. USDA met its goal of 200,000 acres under this small-scale initiative. The new practice for small-scale livestock grazing operations encourages greater diversity geographically and in all types of livestock operations. Visit http://go.usa.gov/x9PFS to view the complete list of acres accepted by state.

Participants in CRP Grasslands establish or maintain long-term, resource-conserving grasses and other plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat on marginally productive agricultural lands. CRP Grasslands participants can use the land for livestock production (e.g. grazing or producing hay), while following their conservation and grazing plans in order to maintain the cover.

Small livestock operations or other farming and ranching operations interested in participating in CRP Grasslands should contact their local FSA office. To learn more about FSA’s conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

New Actively Engaged Provisions for Non-Family Joint Operations or Entities

Many Farm Service Agency programs require all program participants, either individuals or legal entities, to be “actively engaged in farming”. This means participants provide a significant contribution to the farming operation, whether it is capital, land, equipment, active personal labor and/or management. For entities, each partner, stockholder or member with an ownership interest, must contribute active personal labor and/or management to the operation on a regular basis.

The 2014 Farm Bill established additional payment eligibility provisions relating to the farm management component of meeting “actively engaged in farming”. These new provisions apply to joint operations comprised of non-family members or partners, stockholders or persons with an ownership in the farming operation. Effective for 2016 and subsequent crop years, non-family joint operations are afforded to one member that may use a significant contribution of active personal management exclusively to meet the requirements to be determined “actively engaged in farming”. The person or member will be defined as the Farm Manager for the purposes of administering these new management provisions.

In some instances, additional persons or members of a non-family member joint operation who meet the definition of Farm Manager may also be allowed to use such a contribution of active personal management to meet the eligibility requirements. However, under no circumstances may the number of Farm Managers in a non-family joint operation exceed a total of three in any given crop and program year.

USDA Expands Farm Loans for Native Americans Farming and Ranching on Tribal Land

Department Awards First Loan Under Highly Fractionated Indian Land Program

USDA has approved and obligated the first loan under the Highly Fractionated Indian Land Loan program (HFIL). The program, made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides revolving loan funds to qualified intermediary lenders, allowing qualified tribes and individuals the ability to purchase tribal farmland that has multiple owners.

The first recipient, the Native American Community Development Corporation Financial Services, Inc. (NACDCFS) of Browning, Mont., will lend funds directly to tribal members through a $10 million intermediary HFIL loan from USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). NACDCFS addresses critical needs in Native American communities related to the growth of family assets, supports economic development, and enhances the quality of life for communities and residents located on or near Montana’s seven Indian reservations. NACDCFS provides one-on-one technical assistance to Native American entrepreneurs and agricultural producers. NACDCFS is a 501(c) (3), certified Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), through the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Under the 1887 Dawes Act, Indian reservation land was divided and allotted to individual tribal members such that with the passing of each generation, title ownership was divided and parceled among heirs, while the land was not. As a result, land once owned by a single person could today be owned by hundreds or thousands of individuals, resulting in what is known as “highly fractionated Indian land.” In many instances, landowners are unknown or cannot be located, which complicates the coordination of ownership or prevents the use of the property altogether. There are more than

245,000 owners of three million fractionated land interests, spanning approximately 150 Indian reservations.

Under HFIL, tribes and tribal members can submit an application directly to an intermediary lender. To participate, intermediary lenders first must be approved by USDA. The lenders may be private and tribal nonprofit corporations, public agencies, Indian tribes or lenders subject to federal or state regulation (such as a credit union or other financial institution). FSA will lend to the intermediary, which will relend to the applicant. The intermediary lender also will administer the loan for the applicant.

For more information on the program, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or contact the local FSA county office. To find the local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov..

USDA Announces Enrollment Period for Safety Net Coverage in 2017

Producers on farms with base acres under the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can visit their local FSA office to sign contracts and enroll for the 2017 crop year. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2017.

Since shares and ownership of a farm can change year-to-year, producers on the farm must enroll by signing a contract each program year.

If a farm is not enrolled during the 2017 enrollment period, the producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs for the 2017 crop should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program. Producers who made their elections in 2015 must still enroll during the 2017 enrollment period.

The ARC and PLC programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit their local FSA office. To find a local FSA office, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

USDA Encourages Producers to Consider Risk Protection Coverage before Crop Sales Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency encourages producers to examine available USDA crop risk protection options, including federal crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage, before the applicable crop sales deadline.

Producers are reminded that crops not covered by insurance may be eligible for NAP. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded NAP to include higher levels of protection. Beginning, underserved and limited resource farmers are now eligible for free catastrophic level coverage, as well as discounted premiums for additional levels of protection."

Federal crop insurance covers crop losses from natural adversities such as drought, hail and excessive moisture. NAP covers losses from natural disasters on crops for which no permanent federal crop insurance program is available, including perennial grass forage and grazing crops, fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, bioenergy, and industrial crops.

USDA has partnered with Michigan State University and the University of Illinois to create an online tool at www.fsa.usda.gov/nap that allows producers to determine whether their crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP and to explore the best level of protection for their operation. NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production, with higher levels of coverage, up to 65 percent of their expected production at 100 percent of the average market price, including coverage for organics and crops marketed directly to consumers.

Deadlines for coverage vary by state and crop. To learn more about NAP visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center. To find your local USDA Service Centers go to http://offices.usda.gov.

Federal crop insurance coverage is sold and delivered solely through private insurance agents. Agent lists are available at all USDA Service Centers or at USDA's online Agent Locator: http://prodwebnlb.rma.usda.gov/apps/AgentLocator/#. Producers can use the USDA Cost Estimator, https://ewebapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/costestimator/Default.aspx, to predict insurance premium costs.

FSAfarm+, FSA's Customer Self-Service Portal

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has launched a new tool to provide farmers and ranchers with remote access to their personal farm information using their home computers. Farmers and ranchers can now view, print or export their personal farm data all without visiting an FSA county office.

The program, known as **FSA**farm+, provides you with secure access to view your personal FSA data, such as base and yields, Conservation Reserve Program data, other conservation program acreage, Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation status information, field boundaries, farm imagery, name and address details, contact information and membership interest and shares in the operation. This data will be available in real time, at no cost to the producer and allow operators and owners to export and print farm records, including maps. Producers also can electronically share their data with a crop insurance agent from their own personal computer.

Farm operators and owners first will need “Level 2 eAuthentication” to access the webportal. This level of security ensures that personal information is protected for each user. Level 2 access can be obtained by going to www.eauth.usda.gov, completing the required information and then visiting your local FSA office to finalize access.

For more information on **FSA**farm+, the customer self-service portal, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, click http://offices.usda.gov.

New Improvement to Streamline Crop Reporting

Update Lets Farmers and Ranchers Report Common Acreage Information Once

Farmers and ranchers filing crop acreage reports with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and participating insurance providers approved by the Risk Management Agency (RMA) now can provide the common information from their acreage reports at one office and the information will be electronically shared with the other location.

This new process is part of the USDA Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). This interagency collaboration also includes participating private crop insurance agents and insurance companies, all working to streamline the information collected from farmers and ranchers who participate in USDA programs.

Once filing at one location, data that’s important to both FSA and RMA will be securely and electronically shared with the other location avoiding redundant and duplicative reporting, as well as saving farmers and ranchers time.

USDA has been working to streamline the crop reporting process for agricultural producers, who have expressed concerns with providing the same basic common information for multiple locations. In 2013, USDA consolidated the deadlines to 15 dates for submitting these reports, down from the previous 54 dates at RMA and 17 dates for FSA. USDA representatives believe farmers and ranchers will experience a notable improvement in the coming weeks as they approach the peak season for crop reporting later this summer.

More than 93 percent of all annual reported acres to FSA and RMA now are eligible for the common data reporting, and USDA is exploring adding more crops. Producers must still visit both locations to validate and sign acreage reports, complete maps or provide program-specific information. The common data from the first-filed acreage report will now be available to pre-populate and accelerate completion of the second report. Plans are underway at USDA to continue building upon the framework with additional efficiencies at a future date.

Farmers and ranchers are also reminded that they can now access their FSA farm information from the convenience of their home computer. Producers can see field boundaries, images of the farm, conservation status, operator and owner information and much more.

The new customer self-service portal, known as **FSA**Farm+, gives farmers and ranchers online access to securely view, print or export their personal farm data. To enroll in the online service, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for details. To find a local FSA office in your area, visit http://offices.usda.gov.

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 up to $50,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement and some loans between $50,000 and $100,000 will no longer 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, 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.