

December 2015



## Arkansas FSA Newsletter

### Arkansas Farm Service Agency

700 W. Capitol Avenue  
Room 3416  
Little Rock, AR 72201

[www.fsa.usda.gov/ar](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ar)

#### State Committee:

Theodore Eldridge, Sr.,  
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Eric Anderson, Member  
Mike Freeze, Member  
Johnny Loftin, Member  
Richard Simmons,  
Member

#### State Executive Director:

Linda Newkirk

#### Administrative Officer:

Sharon Baker

#### Division Chiefs:

Tony Franco, Farm  
Programs  
James Culpepper, Farm  
Loans

Please contact your local  
FSA Office for questions  
specific to your operation  
or county.

### A Message from the State Executive

We have begun issuing program payments for the 2014 crop year to eligible producers who are participating in Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC).

Additional ARC/PLC payment information is contained in this newsletter. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we process payments. We will begin to accept new offers to participate in a CRP General Signup in December, as well as continuing the signup for the CRP Grassland initiative program.

Details for the CRP programs are contained in this newsletter. We have 34 counties in South Arkansas that are eligible for the Livestock Feed Program. We encourage those producers to make applications as soon as possible.

We acknowledge how busy farmers and ranchers are at this time of year with harvest, fall planting, and grassland management activities, and would like to express our thanks for allowing FSA to be part of your farming operation.

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## **USDA Issues Safety-Net Payments to State Farmers Facing Market Downturn**

The USDA Farm Service Agency has begun issuing financial assistance for the 2014 crop year to those agricultural producers who are participating in the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new programs, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC), are designed to protect against unexpected drops in crop prices or revenues due to market downturns.

Unlike the old direct payments program, which provided funds in good years and bad years, these new programs only provide financial assistance when prices or revenues drop below normal. For example, nationwide, farms participating in ARC-County that are receiving payments experienced a \$20 billion drop in revenues relative to the historical benchmark. Similarly, lower prices in commodities such as peanuts and rice have triggered PLC assistance.

Also, please note that funds provided by the ARC-County program can vary from county to county. The 2014 Farm Bill requires ARC-County payments to be calculated using the national average market year price (which does not vary by county), and the average county yield (which varies by county). This creates county-by-county differences in payment rates. The yield data comes from surveys conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the national standard that uses the highest-precision statistical procedures available. Where that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: county-level crop insurance data from the Risk Management Agency. If that data does not exist, the next strongest data is used: NASS district data. Where NASS district data doesn't exist, the FSA State Committees provide data.

Because the new programs are designed as financial assistance for prices and revenues lower than normal, not all producers will receive a payment, (as occurred with the old direct payments program). ARC/PLC payments are designed to help with unexpected changes in the marketplace, and to supplement other assistance programs, such as crop insurance. To learn more about the data used in calculating payments, how payments are calculated, crop-specific and state-specific information, please visit our website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc).

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## **FSA County Committee Elections Close Dec. 7**

*Farmers and Ranchers Have a Voice in Local Farm Program Decisions*

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds producers that 2015 FSA County Committee election ballots must be returned to local FSA offices by Dec. 7, 2015.

Nearly 7,700 FSA County Committee members serve FSA offices nationwide. Each committee has three to 11 elected members who serve three-year terms of office. One-third of county committee seats are up for election each year. County committee members apply their knowledge and judgment to help FSA make important decisions on its commodity support programs; conservation programs; indemnity and disaster programs; emergency programs and eligibility.

Producers must participate or cooperate in an FSA program to be eligible to vote in the county committee election. Approximately 1.9 million producers are currently eligible to vote. Farmers and ranchers who supervise and conduct the farming operations of an entire farm, but are not of legal voting age, also may be eligible to vote.

Farmers and ranchers will begin receiving their ballots the week of Nov. 9. Ballots include the names of candidates running for the local committee election. FSA has modified the ballot, making it more easily

identifiable and less likely to be overlooked. Voters who do not receive ballots in the coming week can pick one up at their local FSA office. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked no later than Dec. 7, 2015. Newly elected committee members and their alternates will take office Jan. 1, 2016.

For more information, visit the FSA website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/elections](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/elections). You may also contact your local USDA Service Center or FSA office. Visit <http://offices.usda.gov> to find an FSA office near you.

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## **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 the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (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](http://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](http://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.

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## USDA Offers Flood Impacted State Farmers and Ranchers Immediate Disaster Assistance

*Farm Service Agency Stands Ready to Assist Agricultural Producers Slammed by Recent Heavy Rains*

Arkansas Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers across the state of federal farm program benefits that may be available to help eligible producers recover from recent heavy rains and flooding.

FSA offers disaster assistance and low-interest loan programs to assist agricultural producers in their recovery efforts following floods or similar qualifying natural disasters. Available programs and loans include:

- **Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** - provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters (includes native grass for grazing). Eligible producers must have purchased NAP coverage for 2015 crops.
- **Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)** - offers payments to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible losses may include those determined by FSA to have been caused by hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, tropical storms, tornados lightening, extreme heat, and extreme cold. Producers will be required to provide verifiable documentation of death losses resulting from an eligible adverse weather event and must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent.
- **Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for qualifying tree, shrub and vine losses due to natural disaster.
- **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** - provides emergency relief for losses due to feed or water shortages, disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, which are not adequately addressed by other disaster programs. ELAP covers physically damaged or destroyed livestock feed that was purchased or mechanically harvested forage or feedstuffs intended for use as feed for the **producer's** eligible livestock. In order to be considered eligible, harvested forage must be baled; forage that is only cut, raked or windrowed is not eligible. Producers must submit a notice of loss to their local FSA office within 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent.

ELAP also covers up to 150 lost grazing days in instances when a producer has been forced to remove livestock from a grazing pasture due to floodwaters.

For beekeepers, ELAP covers beehive losses (the physical structure) in instances where the hive has been destroyed by a natural disaster including flooding, high winds and tornadoes.

- **Emergency Loan Program** – Available to producers with agriculture operations located in a county under a primary or contiguous **Secretarial Disaster designation**. These low interest loans help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding.
- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** - provides emergency funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate land severely damaged by natural disasters; includes fence loss.
- **HayNet** - is an Internet-based Hay and Grazing Net Ad Service allowing farmers and ranchers to share 'Need Hay' ads and 'Have Hay' ads online. Farmers also can use another feature to

post advertisements for grazing land, specifically ads announcing the availability of grazing land or ads requesting a need for land to graze. [www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet).

To establish or retain FSA program eligibility, farmers and ranchers must report prevented planting and failed acres (crops and grasses). Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form FSA-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and Risk Management Agency (RMA).

For more information on disaster assistance programs and loans visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/) or contact your local FSA Office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## **Secretary Vilsack Announces Additional 800,000 Acres Dedicated to Conservation Reserve Program for Wildlife Habitat and Wetlands**

*Secretary Hails Program's 30th Anniversary, Announces General Signup Period*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that an additional 800,000 acres of highly environmentally sensitive land may be enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under certain wetland and wildlife initiatives that provide multiple benefits on the same land.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will accept new offers to participate in CRP under a general signup to be held Dec. 1, 2015, through Feb. 26, 2016. Eligible existing program participants with contracts expiring Sept. 30, 2015, will be granted an option for one-year extensions. Farmers and ranchers interested in removing sensitive land from agricultural production and planting grasses or trees to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat are encouraged to enroll.

For 30 years, the Conservation Reserve Program has helped farmers and ranchers prevent more than 8 billion tons of soil from eroding, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively, and even sequester 43 million tons of greenhouse gases annually, equal to taking 8 million cars off the road.

The voluntary Conservation Reserve Program allows USDA to contract with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is conserved. Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP protects water quality and restores significant habitat for ducks, pheasants, turkey, quail, deer and other important wildlife which spurs economic development like hunting and fishing, outdoor recreation and tourism across rural America. Today's announcement allows an additional 800,000 acres for duck nesting habitat and other wetland and wildlife habitat initiatives to be enrolled in the program.

Farmers and ranchers should consider the various CRP continuous sign-up initiatives that may help target specific resource concerns. Financial assistance is offered for many practices including conservation buffers and pollinator habitat plantings, and initiatives such as the highly erodible lands, bottomland hardwood tree and longleaf pine.

Farmers and ranchers may visit their FSA county office for additional information. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized the enrollment of grasslands in CRP and information on grasslands enrollment will be available after the regulation is published later this summer.

For more information on CRP and other FSA programs, please visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## 2016 ACREAGE REPORTING DATES

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

Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific deadlines.

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 15th.

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.

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## Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)

Producers in certain Arkansas counties are eligible to apply for 2015 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits.

LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

Eligible livestock producers must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than January 30, 2016 for 2015 losses.

Additional Information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

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## USDA Packages Disaster Protection with Loans to Benefit Specialty Crop and Diversified Producers

*Free basic coverage and discounted premiums available for new and underserved loan applicants*

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced that producers who apply for FSA farm loans also will be offered the opportunity to enroll in new disaster loss protections created by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new coverage, available from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), is available to FSA loan applicants who grow non-insurable crops, so this is especially important to fruit and vegetable producers and other specialty crop growers.

New, underserved and limited income specialty growers who apply for farm loans could qualify for basic loss coverage at no cost, or higher coverage for a discounted premium.

The basic disaster coverage protects at 55 percent of the market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of production. Covered crops include “specialty” crops, for instance, vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, floriculture, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, turf grass, ginseng, honey, syrup, hay, forage, grazing and energy crops. FSA allows beginning, underserved or limited income producers to obtain NAP coverage up to 90 days after the normal application closing date when they also apply for FSA credit.

In addition to free basic coverage, beginning, underserved or limited income producers are eligible for a 50 percent discount on premiums for the higher levels of coverage that protect up to 65 percent of expected production at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers also may work with FSA to protect value-added production, such as organic or direct market crops, at their fair market value in those markets. Targeted underserved groups eligible for free or discounted coverage are American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

FSA offers a variety of loan products, including farm ownership loans, operating loans and microloans that have a streamlined application process.

Growers need not apply for an FSA loan, nor be a beginning, limited resource, or underserved farmer, to be eligible for Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program assistance. To learn more, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap) or [www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/farmloans), or contact your local FSA office at <https://offices.usda.gov>.

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## Youth Loans

The Farm Service Agency makes loans to youth to establish and operate agricultural income-producing projects in connection with 4-H clubs, FFA and other agricultural groups. Projects must be planned and operated with the help of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. The maximum loan amount is \$5000.

### Youth Loan Eligibility Requirements:

- Be a citizen of the United States (which includes Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) or a legal resident alien
- Be 10 years to 20 years of age
- Comply with FSA's general eligibility requirements
- Be unable to get a loan from other sources
- Conduct a modest income-producing project in a supervised program of work as outlined above
- Demonstrate capability of planning, managing and operating the project under guidance and assistance from a project advisor. The project supervisor must recommend the youth loan applicant, along with providing adequate supervision.

Stop by the county office for help preparing and processing the application forms.

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## Beginning Farmer Loans

FSA assists beginning farmers to finance 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## Important December Information

Selected Interest Rates for December 2015	
90-Day Treasury Bill	.125%
Farm Operating Loans — Direct	2.375%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct	3.75%
Farm Ownership Loans — Direct Down Payment, Beginning Farmer or Rancher	1.50%
Emergency Loans	3.375%
Farm Storage Facility Loans (7 years)	2.000%
Sugar Storage Facility Loans	2.500%
Commodity Loans 1996-Present	1.375%

Dates to Remember	
12/15/2015	Acreage reporting date for wheat and oats
1/4/2016	2016 NAP Application Sales Closing Date for: broccoli, cabbage, carrots, greens, onions, pecans (native & improved), potatoes
2/28/2016	2016 NAP Application Sales Closing Date for: corn (yellow & sweet), Cotton, Grain Sorghum, Peanuts, Rice, Soybeans, Beans, Cantaloupes, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Lettuce, Okra, Peas, Peppers, pumpkins, radishes, squash, strawberries, sugarcane, sunflowers, sweet potatoes, turnips (roots), watermelons, sweet sorghum,
2/15/2016	Final planting dates for: spinach
3/15/2016	2016 NAP Application Sales Closing Date for: tomatoes
3/15/2016	Final planting dates for: greens (turnip, mustard), turnip (roots)
4/1/2016	Final planting dates for: cabbage
4/15/2016	Final planting dates for: greens (collard, kale), potatoes, tomatoes
*****	<i>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.</i>
	<i>For questions regarding crop certification and crop loss reports, please contact your local FSA office</i>



Persons with disabilities who require accommodation to attend or participate in this meeting/function/event should contact their local County Executive Director or Sharon Baker at 501-301-3014, (TDD# or Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339), and ([Sharon.baker@ar.usda.gov](mailto:Sharon.baker@ar.usda.gov)). approximately 1 week before the event occurs.

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