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Farm Service Agency

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NEWSLETTER



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Florida FSA Newsletter

Florida Farm Service Agency

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What is the Census of Agriculture?

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Even small plots of land – whether rural or urban – growing fruits, vegetables, or raising food animals count, if \$1,000 or more of such products were raised and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

The Census of Agriculture, taken only once every five years, looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. For America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future, their opportunity.

Census of Agriculture Countdown Begins for America's Farmers and Ranchers

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to strongly represent agriculture in their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census, to be mailed at the end of this year, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and

Tom Hockett

Farm Loans

Justin Teuton

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

other topics. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that over three million farmers operated more than two million farms, spanning over 914 million acres. This was a four percent decrease in the number of U.S. farms from the previous census in 2007. However, agriculture sales, income, and expenses increased between 2007 and 2012. This telling information and thousands of other agriculture statistics are a direct result of responses to the Census of Agriculture.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012 still have time to sign up to receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture report form by visiting www.agcensus.usda.gov and clicking on the 'Make Sure You Are Counted' button through June. NASS defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year (2017).

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP and the Farm Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.

All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Florida is March 1st through July 15th. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.

Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

Crop Insurance Deadline Nears in Florida

Citrus Tree and Fruit Growers Need to Make Insurance Decisions Soon

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reminds Florida citrus tree and fruit growers the final date to apply for crop insurance coverage is April 15. Current policyholders who wish to make changes to their existing coverage also have until the April 15 sales closing date to do so.

Crop insurance provides protection against a loss in production due to natural perils, such as drought or excessive moisture. Coverage is available for avocado trees and mango trees in Miami-Dade County. Coverage is also available for carambola trees in Lee and Miami-Dade counties; for lemon trees in Hendry, Martin, and St. Lucie counties; for lime trees in Lee and Miami-Dade counties; and for grapefruit trees, orange trees, and tangerine trees in many Florida counties.

Coverage is available for grapefruit, mandarins, oranges, tangelos, tangerines, and tangors in many Florida counties; for lemons in Hendry and Martin counties; and for limes in Lee and Miami-Dade counties.

Growers are encouraged to visit their crop insurance agent soon to learn specific details for the 2018 crop year. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the

[RMA Agent Locator](#). Growers can use the [RMA Cost Estimator](#) to get a premium amount estimate of their insurance needs online. Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at www.rma.usda.gov.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs require that applicants have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information found on a customer's credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score.

- Make sure to pay bills on time. Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt.
- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts.

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

Supervised Credit

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Loan programs are considered supervised credit. Unlike loans from a commercial lender, FSA loans are intended to be temporary in nature. Therefore, it is our goal to help you graduate to commercial credit, and our farm loan staff is available to help borrowers through training and credit counseling.

The FSA team will help borrowers identify their goals to ensure financial success. Through this process, FSA staff will advise borrowers in developing strategies and a plan to meet your operation's goals and graduate to commercial credit. Ultimately, the borrower is responsible for the success of the farming operation, but FSA's staff will help in an advisory role to provide the tools necessary to help you achieve your operational goals and manage your finances.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

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).