

October 16, 2017



Farm Service Agency **Electronic News Service**

NEWSLETTER

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Florida FSA Newsletter

Florida Farm Service Agency

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Farm Program

USDA Holds Disaster Assistance and Hurricane Recovery Workshops

USDA Service Centers in Florida are holding disaster assistance and hurricane recovery workshops in 48 counties for farmers and ranchers impacted by Hurricane Irma during the next few weeks. The event is free and open to the public. To find meeting dates and locations, go to <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Florida/state-events/index>.

Representatives from USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) and [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) will present information on the various disaster assistance programs and resources available for farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Workshop topics include emergency assistance for livestock & crop-related expenses and losses; financial assistance programs to help with farm and farmland damage; deadlines for applying for disaster assistance programs and programs to help with restoration and rehabilitation of farm and ranch land.

USDA Farm Service Agency Offers Text

Tom Hockert

Farm Loans
Justin Teuton

Alerts to Florida Producers

Subscribers Can Receive Important Program Reminders and Updates

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

In light of the recent Hurricane events, please subscribe to our text message option to get timely FSA news sent directly to your phone.

Text **Florida** to FSANOW (372-669) to subscribe to text message alerts from the Florida State Office.

Text FL and the county's name (Alachua County = FLAlachua) to FSANOW (372-669) to subscribe to text message alerts from your local County Office.

Standard text messaging rates apply. Contact your wireless carrier for details associated with your particular data plan. Participants may unsubscribe at any time.

Please contact your local FSA office if you have questions regarding FSA's email news service or the new text message option.

What if I only have a small operation or do not participate in government farm programs, do I have to fill out a Census of Agriculture form?

The Census of Agriculture is the responsibility of every individual who produces or grows any agricultural product, including field crops, fruits, vegetables, floriculture, and livestock, regardless of the size or type of operation. For Census of Agriculture purposes, a farm is 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.

USDA Processing Pending Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Enrollment Offers

Acceptance of Most 2018 Offers Temporarily Suspended

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will process many pending eligible offers for land enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and will temporarily suspend accepting most new offers until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

All current, eligible CRP continuous enrollment offers made through Sept. 30, 2017, except for those made under the Pollinator Habitat Initiative (CP42), will be approved. Additionally, FSA is temporarily suspending acceptance of most offers going forward to provide time to review CRP allocation levels, and to avoid exceeding the statutory cap of 24 million acres.

The CRP acreage cap is a provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Current enrollment is about 23.5 million acres nationwide. USDA is accepting all pending continuous enrollment offers that were made beginning on May 4, 2017, and extending through Sept. 30, 2017, except Pollinator Habitat Initiative offers. Pollinator acreage offers are being declined because the program has met its acreage enrollment goal. Effective immediately, USDA is suspending acceptance of all new CRP continuous offers received or submitted after Sept. 30, 2017. The suspension will continue until later in the 2018 fiscal year.

However, FSA will continue to accept eligible offers for state-specific Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP Grasslands enrollment. Offers received on or after Oct. 1,

2017, are subject to fiscal year 2018 rental rates which have been adjusted to reflect current market conditions and were established after careful review of the latest USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash rent data.

In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat. Payment totals for 2017 were announced earlier this week totaling over \$1.6 billion.

For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. To locate your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

USDA Issues Farm Safety Net and Conservation Payments

USDA Farm Service Agency announced that over \$9.6 billion in payments will be made to producers through the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Conservation Reserve (CRP) programs. The USDA is issuing approximately \$8 billion in payments under the ARC and PLC programs for the 2016 crop year, and \$1.6 billion under CRP for 2017.

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 revenue or prices for covered commodities. Over half a million producers will receive ARC payments and over a quarter million producers will receive PLC payments for 2016 crops, starting the first week of October and continuing over the next several months.

Payments are being made to producers who enrolled base acres of barley, corn, grain sorghum, lentils, oats, peanuts, dry peas, soybeans, wheat and canola. In the upcoming months, payments will be announced after marketing year average prices are published by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service for the remaining covered commodities. Those include long and medium grain rice (except for temperate Japonica rice), which will be announced in November; remaining oilseeds and chickpeas, which will be announced in December; and temperate Japonica rice, which will be announced in early February 2017. The estimated payments are before application of sequestration and other reductions and limits, including adjusted gross income limits and payment limitations.

Also, as part of an ongoing effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat, USDA will begin issuing 2017 CRP payments in October to over 375,000 Americans.

Signed into law by President Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation program in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers and landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species. In return for enrolling in CRP, USDA, through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Participants enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP payments are made to participants who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

For more details regarding ARC and PLC programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. For more information about CRP, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Environmental Review Required Before Project Implementation

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to consider all potential environmental impacts for federally-funded projects before the project is approved.

For all Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, an environmental review must be completed before

actions are approved, such as site preparation or ground disturbance. These programs include, **but are not limited to**, the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) program and farm loans. If project implementation begins before FSA has completed an environmental review, this will result in a denial of the request. There are exceptions regarding the Stafford Act and emergencies. It is important to wait until you receive written approval of your project proposal before starting any actions, including, but not limited to, vegetation clearing, site preparation or ground disturbance.

Remember to contact your local FSA office early in your planning process to determine what level of environmental review is required for your program application so that it can be completed timely.

Applications cannot be approved contingent upon the completion of an environmental review. FSA must have copies of all permits and plans before an application can be approved.

USDA Seeks Applications for Grants to Help Agricultural Producers and Small Rural Businesses Develop New Products

The USDA Rural Development (RD) is accepting applications for grants to help farmers, ranchers and producer-based businesses nationwide develop new product lines.

The funding is being provided through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program. VAPG grants can be used to develop new products from raw agricultural products or promote new markets for established products. Veterans, socially-disadvantaged groups, beginning farmers and ranchers, operators of small and medium-sized family farms and ranches and farmer and rancher cooperatives are given special priority.

The deadline to submit paper applications is Jan. 31, 2018. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due Jan. 24, 2018. For more information on this grant program, visit [USDA Rural Development](#). For assistance in Florida, call 352-338-3400.

Loan Servicing

There are options for Farm Service Agency loan customers during financial stress. If you are a borrower who is unable to make payments on a loan, contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager to learn about the options available to you.

Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) Program

FSA borrowers with farms located in designated primary or contiguous disaster areas who are unable to make their scheduled FSA loan payments should consider the Disaster Set-Aside (DSA) program.

DSA is available to producers who suffered losses as a result of a natural disaster and is intended to relieve immediate and temporary financial stress. FSA is authorized to consider setting aside the portion of a payment/s needed for the operation to continue on a viable scale.

Borrowers must have at least two years left on the term of their loan in order to qualify.

Borrowers have eight months from the date of the disaster designation to submit a complete application. The application must include a written request for DSA signed by all parties liable for the debt along with production records and financial history for the operating year in which the disaster occurred. FSA may request additional information from the borrower in order to determine eligibility.

All farm loans must be current or less than 90 days past due at the time the DSA application is

complete. Borrowers may not set aside more than one installment on each loan.

The amount set-aside, including interest accrued on the principal portion of the set-aside, is due on or before the final due date of the loan.

For more information, contact your local FSA farm loan office.

Dates to Remember

November 10 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

November 23 - Federal Holiday Observed. Offices Closed.

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).